



OUR RELIGION

AS IT WAS AND AS IT IS.

T

OUR RELIGION

AS IT WAS AND AS IT IS.

BY THE

REV. ROBERT J. LAIDLAW,

Pastor of St. Paul's Church, Hamilton, Ontario.

..

Toronto :

HUNTER, ROSE & CO., 25 WELLINGTON ST. WEST.

MDCCCLXXIX.

ENTERED according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year one thousand
eight hundred and seventy-nine, by ROBERT J. LAIDLAW, in the Office of the
Minister of Agriculture.

and
the

PREFACE.



PREFACE.

WHILE pursuing a course of study in the comparative history of religions, several years ago, my attention was called to the wide difference observable between certain heathen religions as practised, and the doctrines of the sacred books on which those religions are based. This led to the inquiry, Is the same thing true of our religion—meaning by *Our Religion*, the religion based upon the Bible?

The more carefully this inquiry was pondered, the stronger became the conviction that the question was one deserving serious consideration; and from that time to the present, the relation between Our Reli-

PREFACE.

gion as practised, and as revealed in Scripture, has been made the subject of special study, the condensed results of which are contained in the following chapters.

In the course of this study, the chief reliance for information—apart from Scripture—has been upon what is known as Evangelical literature, yet the writings of those who are avowedly out of sympathy with orthodox views of the Bible and its teachings have not been overlooked ; and the help derived from the writings of scholars, of whatever shade of religious opinion, is duly acknowledged.

The small numerals affixed to quotations in the following pages, refer to the *Index to Quotations* at page 317.

Throughout this treatise, religion is viewed mainly in its practical, not its theological aspects, which accounts for the absence of the discussion of certain fundamental doctrines upon which the chief emphasis is laid in all theological works. The treatise does not claim to be in any sense exhaustive, yet under

PREFACE.

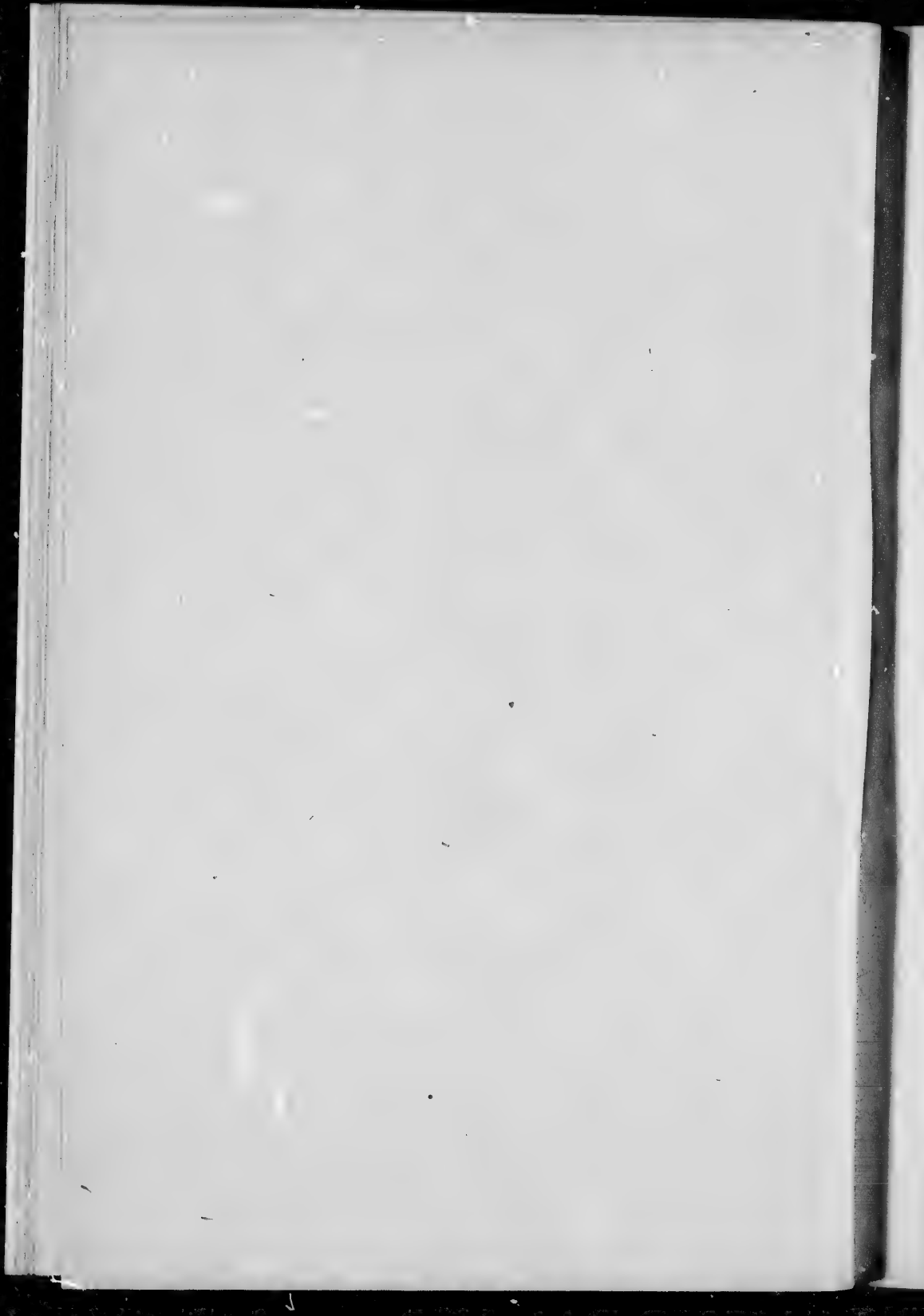
9

a deep conviction of the importance of the subject discussed, it is given to the public, not without the hope that it may be of service in furthering the interests of true religion.

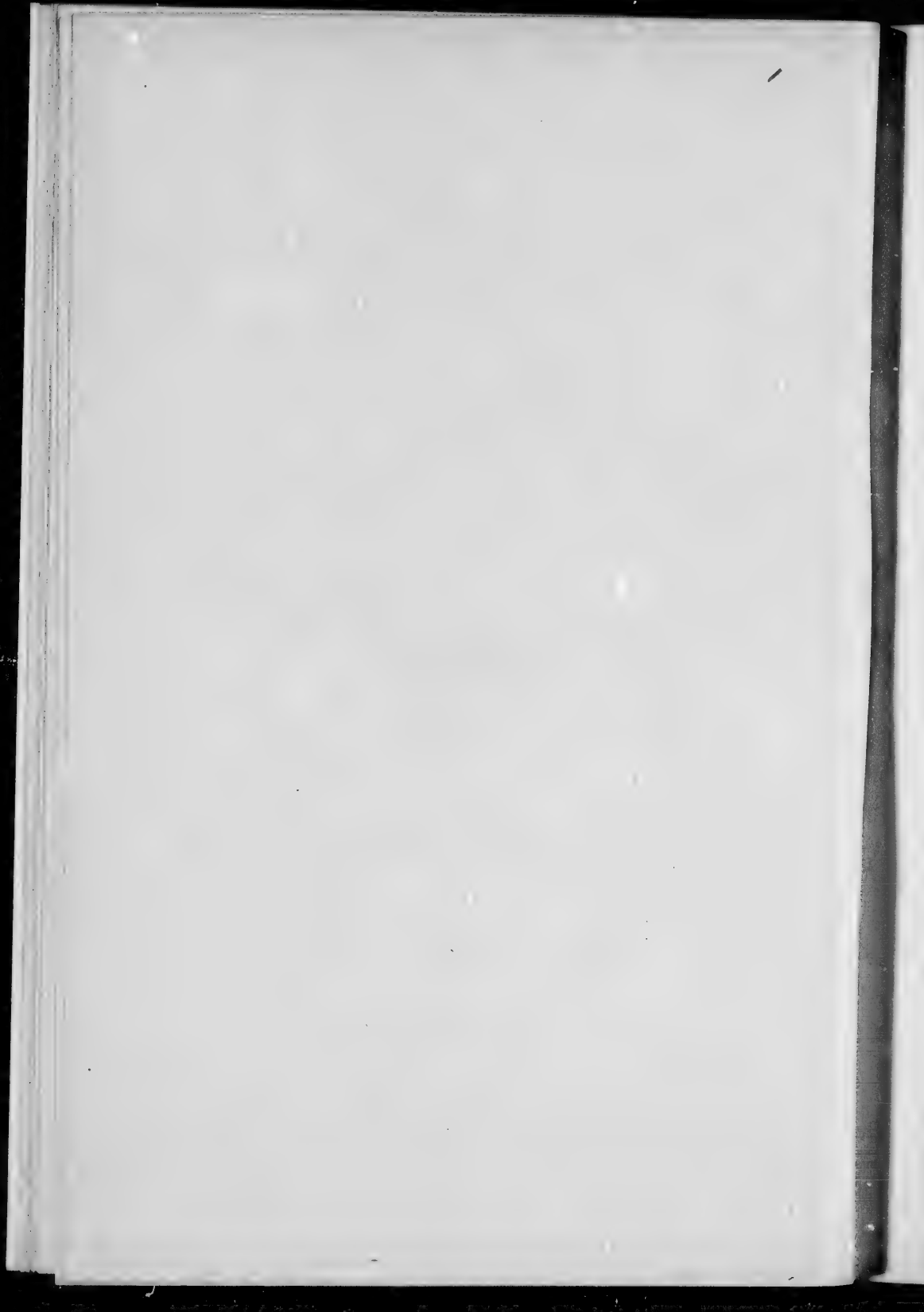
R. J. L.

HAMILTON, June 1879.





CONTENTS.





CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PREFACE	7
CHAPTER I.	
IS OUR RELIGION OF TO DAY THE RELIGION OF THE BIBLE?	17
CHAPTER II.	
PRIMITIVE RELIGION—RELIGION BEFORE THE FALL.	35
CHAPTER III.	
THE BEGINNING OF FORMAL WORSHIP.	51
CHAPTER IV.	
ORIGIN AND USE OF "SACRED THINGS," AND "PLACES OF WORSHIP."	73

CHAPTER V.

	PAGE
THE HOUSEHOLD, THE CHURCH, AND RELIGIOUS CONVERSATION.	93

CHAPTER VI.

DECLINE OF EARLY SCRIPTURAL RELIGION, WITH ATTEMPTS AT RESTORATION.	113
--	-----

CHAPTER VII.

JESUS THE TRUE RESTORER.	131
----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTIANITY UNFORTUNATE IN ITS FRIENDS.	169
--	-----

CHAPTER IX.

IS THE BIBLE ADAPTED TO ALL TIMES?	195
--	-----

CHAPTER X.

MUST SCRIPTURE TRUTH BE SYSTEMATIZED?	217
---	-----

CHAPTER XI.

SECTS, SYSTEMS, AND THE CHURCH.	239
---	-----

CONTENTS.

15

CHAPTER XII.

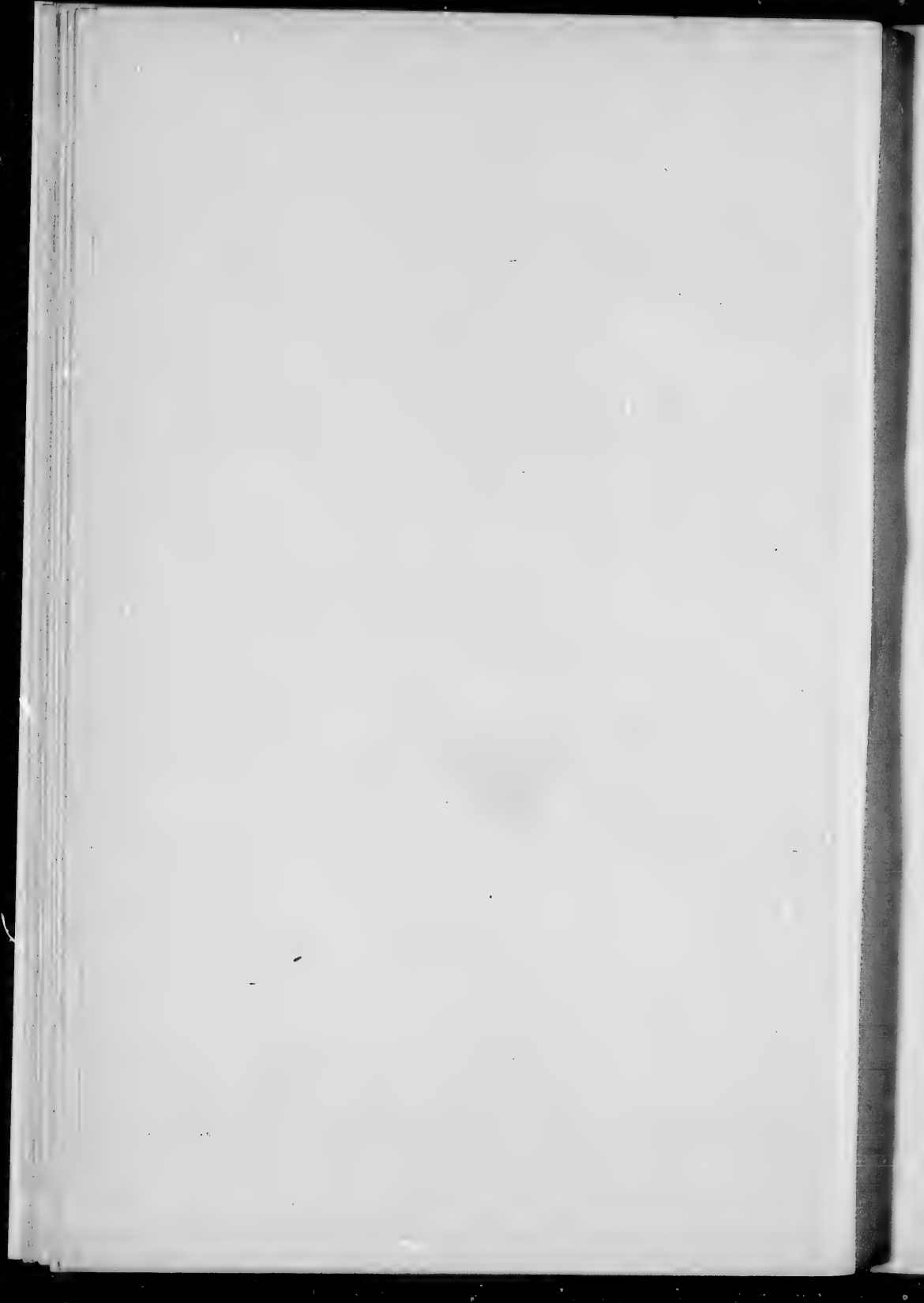
	PAGE
RELIGION AND THE STATE.	261

CHAPTER XIII.

DO WE NEED ANOTHER REFORMATION? . . .	287
---------------------------------------	-----

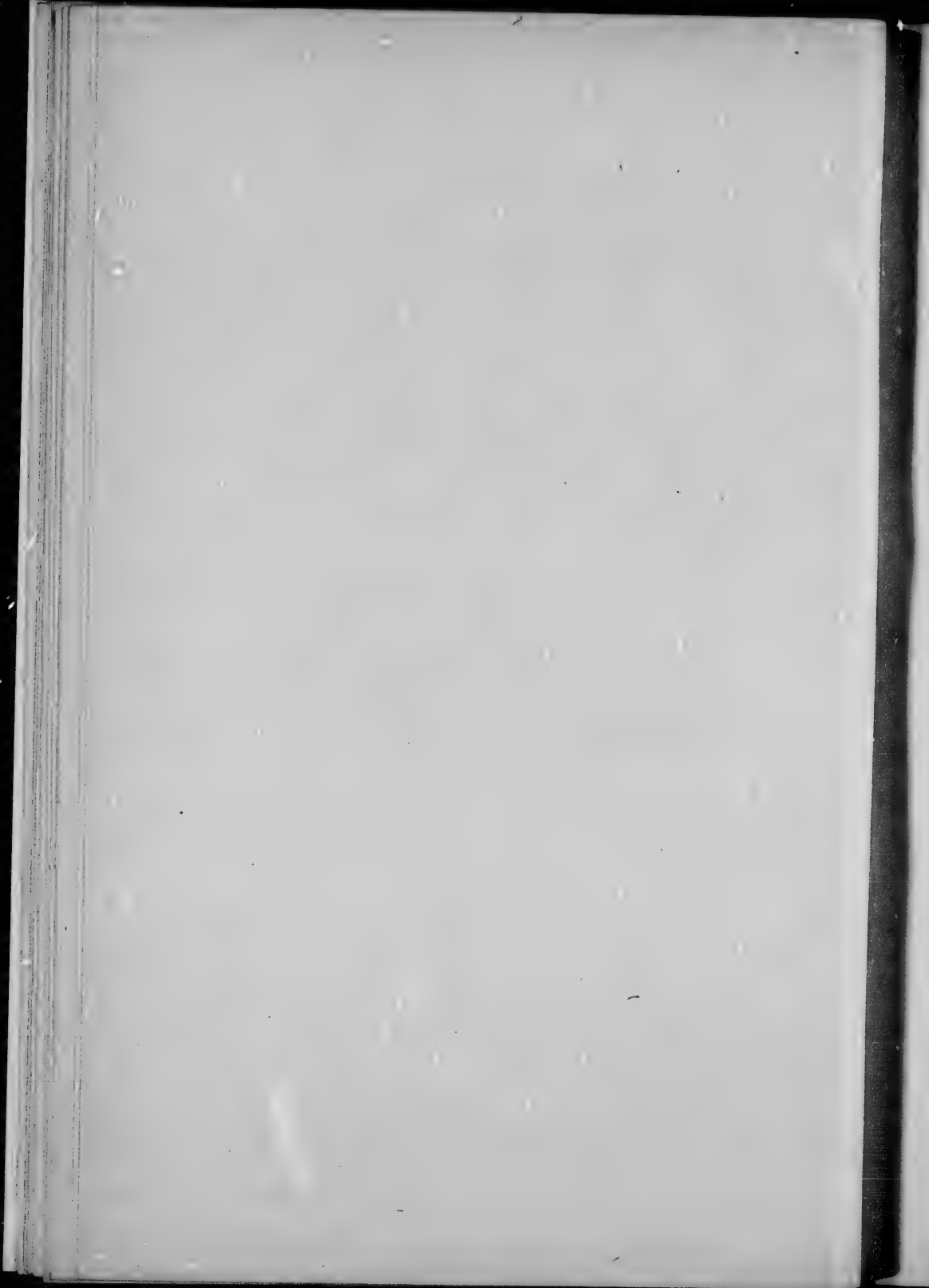
INDEX TO QUOTATIONS.	317
------------------------------	-----





CHAPTER I.

IS OUR RELIGION OF TO-DAY THE
RELIGION OF THE BIBLE?





OUR RELIGION

AS IT WAS AND AS IT IS.

CHAPTER I.

IS OUR RELIGION OF TO-DAY THE RELIGION OF
THE BIBLE ?

MOHAMMEDANISM is the Religion taught in the Koran ; Parseeism, that taught in the Zend-Avesta ; certain other Religions are based on certain other books : *Our Religion* is that of the Bible.

The Bible is not our only book which treats of religion ; thousands of religious books, as well as books of other kinds, have grown up around it. Those added books are not of equal authority with

the Bible; they are not all in harmony with its teaching; yet they exert so considerable an influence upon the moulding of religious opinion as to suggest the inquiry:—Is our religion of to-day the religion of the Bible, or of the literature that has grown up around the Bible?

Everywhere, and in every age, there has been a tendency to drift away from the teaching of a sacred book. Unto the Jews were committed the oracles of God, and for these oracles they cherished the deepest reverence; they kept them in the most sacred place; they gave them into the keeping of their most learned men; they transcribed them with the most rigid accuracy—counting every word, syllable and letter; they had them expounded by their wisest theologians, the doctors of the law; any violation, or supposed violation, of their precepts, was met with the severest punishment. Yet, at the very time the Jews thought they were worshipping God according to the strict letter of His word, Jesus declared that they were worshipping in vain, “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”¹

Something similar has befallen certain heathen religions. Take Hinduism, for example. That re-

ligion is a vast system of error; it enjoins the worship of idols; it teaches the doctrine of transmigration of souls; it demands the burning of widows with the dead bodies of their husbands; it lends all the weight of its authority to the caste system of India. The Hindoos have a sacred book upon which their religion is based, and from which they profess to draw their religious life; and for this ancient bible of theirs they have the profoundest reverence. They always quote it as of Divine authority, and claim to be worshipping in accordance with both its letter and spirit. Yet not one of these erroneous rites and dogmas, for which they contend so earnestly, is taught in that book. The original sacred book of the Hindoos—the Rig-Veda—is a pure book. It is not to be compared with our Bible, yet it is on the side of virtue and opposed to vice. It teaches that “God has established the eternal laws of right and wrong, that He punishes sin and rewards virtue, that He is just yet merciful and willing to forgive, a judge and yet a father.”¹ The Rig-Veda, says Max-Müller, “knows of no idols.” “There is no authority in the hymns of the Veda for the complicated system of caste;” “no trace of

metempsychosis, or that transmigration of souls from human to animal bodies, which is generally supposed to be a distinguishing feature of Indian religion ; " no law to sanction the blasphemous pretensions of a priesthood to divine honours, or the degradation of any human being to a state below the animal. There is no text to countenance laws which allow the marriage of children and prohibit the re-marriage of child-widows ; and the unhal-
lowed rite of burning the widow with the corpse of her husband, is against both the spirit and the letter of the Veda."¹

This want of agreement between the Hinduism of the present day and the teaching of the book upon which that religion is based, is to be accounted for by the fact that the Hindoos have other religious books—almost countless—in some of which these doctrines are taught ; and without calling all these added books sacred in the same sense with the original Veda, they are drawing their religious life more from them than from that which they regard as their supremely authoritative sacred book.

" The age of the poets who wrote the Vedic hymns was followed by an age of collectors and imitators ;

that age was succeeded by an age of theological prose writers, and this last by an age of writers of scientific manuals;”¹ and it is from all these later writings the Hindu religion has derived its most objectionable features. During the course of centuries, error after error crept in so gradually, and one obnoxious feature after another was added so silently, that even the most learned devotees of the system failed to notice the change.

It is true, the Hindoos have not had free access to the Vedic hymns in written or printed form. Their acquaintance with them has been for the most part traditionary, and on this account errors could the more easily find their way into their religious system. “At the present day there are but few Brahmins who can read and understand the Veda.”² They learn by heart certain portions of it which are muttered at sacrifices, and which every priest must know. But the language and grammar of the Veda being somewhat different from the common Sanskrit, the young priests have as much difficulty in understanding those hymns, as we have in translating old English. Yet the jealousy with which the Hindoos have cherished the idea of the

divine inspiration of the Vedic hymns, should be set over against this, as having a tendency to prevent the introduction of error. According to the orthodox views of Indian theologians, not a single line of the Veda was the work of human authors. The whole is in some way or other the work of the Deity. And, besides, the Hindoos have guarded the text of the Veda as carefully as the Jews ever guarded the text of the Old Testament. As early as about 600 B. C., in the theological schools of India, every verse, every word, every syllable of the ten books of the Veda had been carefully counted. Yet, with all this reverence and care, in the course of centuries, through the influence of the teaching and writings of collectors, imitators, theologians and students of science, the character of the Hindu religion has been materially altered, and that for the worse; and the Veda is now quoted in support of the most pernicious alterations. Of course, the passages quoted are either unintentionally distorted, or deliberately tampered with, to make them agree with the new doctrine in support of which they are cited.

Take only one example. It has been discovered

within recent years by the leading philologists of the age, that, in the verse quoted by the Hindoos in support of the burning of widows, the Sanskrit word *agneh*, fire, has been substituted for *agre*, altar, and the verse has thus been made to teach, not that certain women shall draw near and pour a libation upon the altar, but that certain other women must draw near and consign themselves to the fire. The Hindu reading of the verse, as translated by Colebrooke, is as follows :—" Let these women, not to be widowed, good wives, adorned with collyrium, holding clarified butter, consign themselves to the fire ! Immortal, not childless, not husbandless, well adorned with gems, let them pass into the fire, whose original element is water." ¹ And the verse thus read is made to refer to the widow of the husband whose body lies on the altar.

But a better acquaintance with the Sanskrit language has disclosed the fact that, when properly understood, the verse refers, not to the widow of the deceased, but to other women who are present ; and the true reading is :—" May these women, who are not widows, but have good husbands, draw near with oil and butter. Those that are mothers may

go up first to the altar, without tears, without sorrow, but decked with fine jewels." And the verse is followed with this address to the widow:—"Rise, woman, come to the world of life; thou sleepest nigh unto him whose life is gone. Come to us. Thou hast fulfilled the duties of a wife to the husband who once took thy hand and made thee a mother." ¹

But this discovery will not be sufficient to set aside the cruel custom. When a religious rite, introduced in the remote past, has been observed for centuries as of divine appointment, it is more in harmony with human ideas of sacredness, for the people concerned to believe that the observance of that rite must be taught somewhere in their Sacred Book, though perhaps not in the most explicit terms, than to acknowledge that it should be set aside, because the passage which has all along been relied on in its support has been shown to have been misquoted and misapplied. And if the observance of the rite in question be found frequently enjoined in later religious books which are professedly in harmony with the first, then the testimony of those books will be appealed to and accepted ;

and thus the original Bible is superseded, and later books—not accounted sacred in an equal sense—are made to take its place, and become the real sacred books of the people concerned.

All this has been true of Hinduism. Is it true of our religion? Since the close of the Book of Revelation, eighteen hundred years ago, have there been those—whether collectors, imitators, theologians, or students of science—who have dared either to “add unto” or “take away from the words of the book of this prophecy”?¹ Has the Bible, from any cause, ceased to be in the proper sense our Sacred Book? And have other books in some way taken the place which rightfully belongs to it alone?

Filling a book with that which represents the highest kind of truth will not of itself make the book, in the proper sense, sacred to a man or an age. Neither will filling a book with that which represents a very inferior kind of thought prevent the book from becoming in an important sense sacred. The book which is most sacred to a man is not the book which is laid away on the shelf as having come from God; but the volume which the man reads, and whose contents exert the most pow-

erful influence in forming his most important judgments, and in controlling his destiny whether for weal or woe,—that is the man's most sacred book, by whatever name it may be called, and on whatsoever subject written, and by whomsoever. The Bible is entitled to be called *Holy* in a sense in which no other book may lay claim to this title, yet every book that is read may well have the word *sacred* printed upon it, in that it has left its impress upon a human heart and contributed its share toward forming the opinions and character of a man.

If we have given the Bible a higher place than all other books, not in name and theory simply, but in fact; if we have so familiarized ourselves with its letter and spirit that all that is learned from other writings must take a subordinate place,—then the Bible is our Sacred Book. But if we have allowed the sentiments that are breathed from the pages of other literature to have the foremost place in our thoughts and the controlling influence in the moulding of our opinions, the Bible is not our most sacred book—notwithstanding the fact that it contains the highest and holiest kind of truth for the man who will properly acquaint himself with its contents.

The Bible is read and taught—more perhaps in in our day than in any previous age. Portions of it are statedly read and discoursed upon in the Church and Sabbath-school, and occasionally in the home. There are a few pious hearts in every Christian community who peruse the Bible with silent delight day by day, for the comfort it brings them. There are others who search the Scriptures more critically and make the interpreting and expounding of their contents the chief work of their lives. But after all—How many of the representatives of our religion have read the Bible once from beginning to end? Or if this question admits of a favourable answer, How many have so perused the book that they are better acquainted with its letter and spirit than with any other literature and thought whatsoever? Think of all the engrossing pursuits of the present age, carried on for the most part in a purely secular spirit; of all the intercourse man holds with man, and of the many thoughts and opinions in constant circulation which have emanated solely from the human head and heart; of the influence of those opinions in moulding the tastes, fashions and whole character of society;

of the reflex influence of society upon individual life, and of its power to reproduce, in the individual, thoughts and opinions like unto those by which it was itself begotten. Think of all the literature that is produced and read—Dailies, Weeklies, Monthlies, Quarterlies, Novels, Biographies, Histories, Philosophies, Essays on Science, Literature and the Arts,—not to speak of Sermons, Sacred Songs, Theological Reviews and religious books of every kind. For every minute many who belong to the Christian population of the world spend in the study of the original letter of their religion, they spend hours in the more interested perusal of other writings. The treatment they give the Bible is altogether peculiar. They speak of the Book in the most complimentary and reverential terms. They call it *The Bible!* *The Book of books!* *The Word of God!* They fear it, and contend for the idea of its sacredness. They do everything in short which the most zealous devotees should be expected to do; but the one thing which, as intelligent men, they should do above all other things, they do not, namely,—read the Book. That they occasionally read parts of it, cannot be denied. That they ima-

gine they have in some way acquired a correct knowledge of what it teaches, is equally unquestionable. That they actually have such a knowledge is another matter. What a large proportion of the representatives of our religion know about the Bible, has been learned at second hand, and not from independent study. Their religious knowledge is, to all intents and purposes, traditionary. It has come down to them mainly through oral instruction, and through the writings of those who are supposed to have studied the Bible so thoroughly as to be able to give the substance of it in their own language. It has come down in part also in the form of books and articles written for the very purpose of making light of sacred things and destroying men's confidence in the authority of Scripture. For the whole work of interpreting and applying Scripture is not in the hands of those who might be presumed to teach wisely. Every writer or speaker on whatever subject feels at liberty to make use of Scripture texts to illustrate his theory, however false. And all these utterances of every kind have influence with men;—an influence which, by reason of the constancy of its appeals, is in many instances

far more potent than that of the pure voice of the Bible, which is heard only occasionally. And this condition of things is becoming intensified as the years roll by. Every thoughtful man recognises the fact, that the literature of our age is working a revolution in the world. "To the Church itself," says Carlyle, "all is changed, in its preaching, in its working, by the introduction of books. The Church is the working recognized union of our Priests or Prophets, of those who, by wise teaching, guide the souls of men. While there was no writing, even while there was no easy-writing or *printing*, the preaching of the voice was the natural sole method of performing this. But, now with books! He that can write a true book to persuade England, is he not the Bishop and Archbishop, the Primate of England and of all England? I many a time say, the writers of newspapers, pamphlets, poems, books, these are the real working effective Church of a modern country. A preaching Friar settles himself in every village, and builds a pulpit which he calls Newspaper. Therefrom he preaches what most momentous doctrine is in him for man's salvation; and dost thou not listen and believe?"¹

Is it not possible that in the course of this strangely commingled process of handing down to generation after generation, the ideas they are to entertain of what the Scriptures principally teach, wrong impressions may have been given, false opinions may have come to be accepted, and many inaccuracies may have crept into men's views of Bible truth? We are unwilling to entertain the thought that it is possible that our religion of to-day may be, in some respects, as far removed from the religion taught in our Sacred Scriptures, as that of the Jews of Our Lord's day was from the religion of the Old Testament, or as the Hinduism of to-day is from the religion taught in the original Vedic hymns. Yet with our thousands upon thousands of books, every one of which is more or less sacred; with uninspired prophets without number, who are believed at sight; with unholy apostles everywhere who need to work no miracles in order to have their doctrines accepted; with such a driving storm of fitful changeful thought as has been beating upon men's heads for centuries, it would be strange if the representatives of our religion should not have found it almost impossible to keep within sight of the teach-

ings of our Sacred Scriptures. Whether they—and we—have really been driven away from those teachings, and if so, how far?—is a question well worthy the attention of the present generation;—especially since, deep down in some earnest hearts, there has risen up an utterance which is struggling to come forth to the light in the plain words,—Our religion of to-day is not the pure and simple religion of the olden time; show us the religion of the Bible that we may return to it.

Yet the immediate moral of all this is, not that other valuable literature should be read and studied less, but that the Bible should be read independently, and studied more.



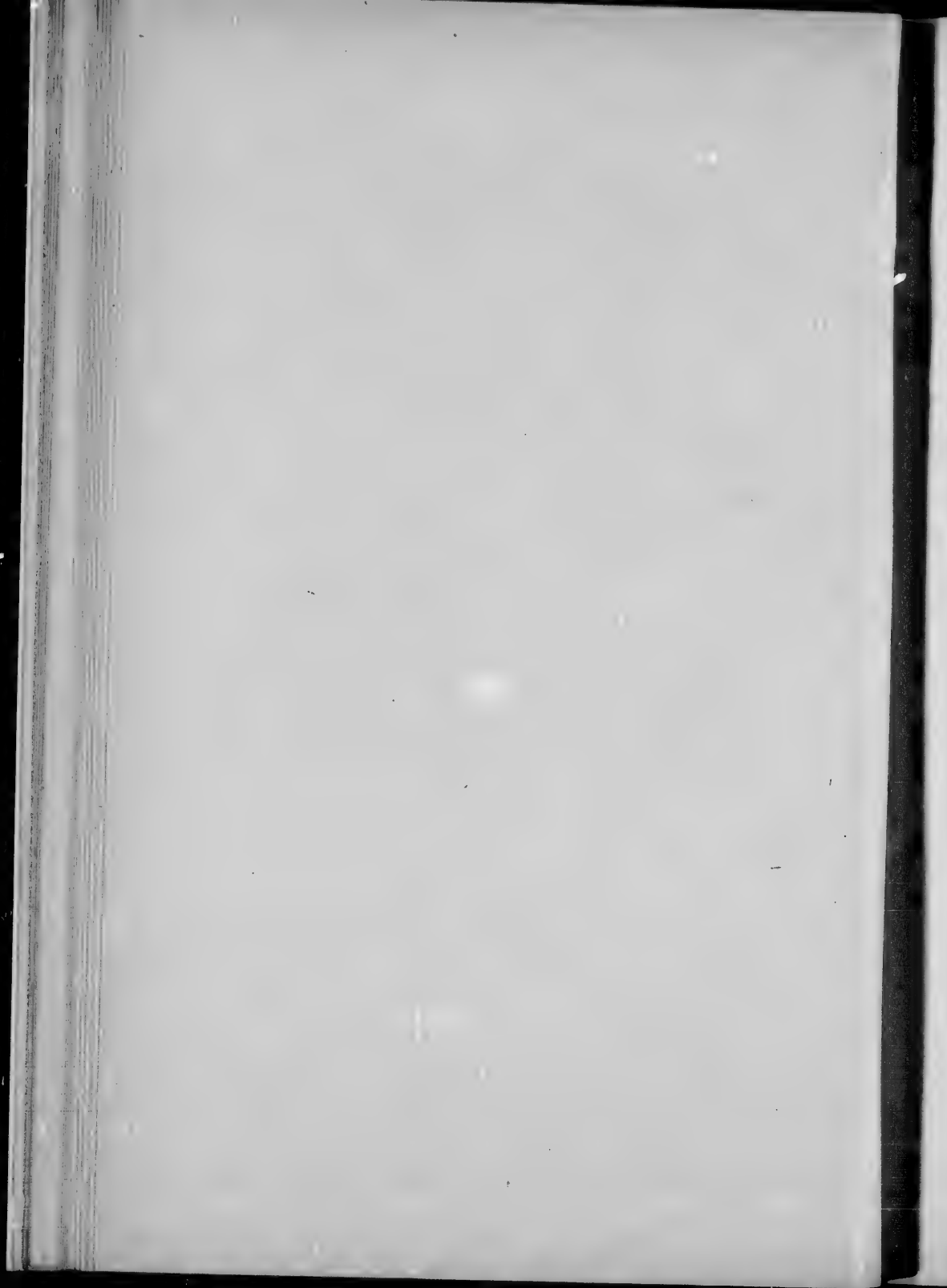
IS.

—and
teach-
worthy
cially
e has
come
ligion
of the
e that

t that
studied
dent-

CHAPTER II.

PRIMITIVE RELIGION—RELIGION BEFORE THE FALL.





CHAPTER II.

PRIMITIVE RELIGION—RELIGION BEFORE THE FALL.

“**R**ELIGION is something which has passed, and is still passing, through an historical evolution, and all we can do is to follow it up to its origin, and then try to comprehend it in its later historical developments.”¹

Among the commonly accepted definitions of religion are the following :—“ The recognition of God as an object of worship, love, and obedience ; right feelings toward God as rightly apprehended ; piety : ”²—“ An acknowledgment of our obligation to God as our Creator, with a feeling of reverence and love, and consequent duty or obedience to Him ; duty to God and to His creatures ; practical piety ; godliness ; devotion ; devoutness ; holiness.”³ Religion, according to Plato, is “ A likeness

to God according to our ability ;" according to Kant, "Reverence for the moral law as a divine command ;" according to Schelling, "The union of the Finite and the Infinite;" according to Fichte, "Faith in a moral government of the world ;" according to Hegel, "Morality becoming conscious of the free universality of its concrete essence."

True religion, as revealed in Scripture, is a just sense of relationship to God, rightly cherished and constantly exercised ; and the various ways in which this sense of relationship expresses itself, constitute true worship in the widest sense. The word religion is used in a secondary and more limited sense, as meaning a particular system of faith and worship,—as when we speak of the Hindu Religion, the Mohammedan Religion. In whatever aspect we view it, religion is not synonymous with morality. Morality is, "The doctrine of right and wrong ; the doctrine or practice of the duties of human life." As defined by Coleridge, it is "The practice of duty ; obedience to the moral law ; virtue ; goodness." But "obedience to the moral law" is too comprehensive a definition. It includes conscious allegiance to God, which properly belongs not

to morality but to religion. Morality, strictly speaking, is "the practice of duty" with the idea of relation to God left out. A man may be moral without being religious in even the secondary sense—that of being attached to some particular system of faith and worship. His practice of duty may have relation only to his fellow-men and to the present life, and may be simply a matter of custom and expediency; God may not be in all his thoughts. On the other hand, a man may be very religious in the secondary sense, and yet be an immoral man. He may be devotedly attached to a particular system of faith and worship, yet pay no heed to the practice of duty. But it is impossible for a man to be religious in the Scriptural sense without being moral. In true Scriptural religion, love to God and love to man are inseparably joined, and "on these two hang all the law and the prophets;"¹ in their union there is implied the cordial observance of every known duty.

With regard to the origin of both religion and morality, various theories have been adopted by those who refuse to accept the Scripture doctrine that man was originally created in a state of sinless

perfection. But in our present inquiry no notice need be taken of avowedly anti-Scriptural views. We are not now entering upon a consideration of the respective merits of opposite religions; we are not about to discuss the question of the superiority of our religion to certain philosophies which are openly antagonistic to the teaching of the Bible; we are not even to consider the question of the plenary inspiration of Scripture;—we are entering upon the subject included under the title,—“*Our Religion as it was and as it is,*” and our main inquiry must be, What was our religion originally and what is it now? Is it to-day what it should be, accepting as it does the doctrine of the divine Inspiration of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and taking those Scriptures as the basis of its life? What is our religion? Is it a system of faith and worship religiously adhered to with but indifferent regard to the question of personal piety and individual morality? Or is it religion in the broadest and best sense,—its subjects having a delightful regard to their relationship to God in all that they do? Is our religion something natively foreign to this earth?—Something which

has been introduced into the world to counteract the disease of sin; and which must therefore be kept separate as far as possible from all worldly concerns? And must worship be regarded as consisting solely in the observance of certain so-called religious duties, at particular times and in places appointed for exclusive attendance upon these duties; and at other times and in other places must the business of life be carried on after a human and earthly ideal? Or is our religion something which is inseparable from the right use of this earth by man as God's steward? And is worship to be free and all-pervading, having been modified from time to time as to its outward form only, in order that it might be properly adapted to man's condition whether as a sinless or a sinful being?

In seeking answers to these questions, we begin by inquiring into the primitive condition of man, as revealed in Scripture. The records which relate to man's sinless days are brief, yet they furnish sufficient information to enable us to form a tolerably definite conception of the nature of religion before the Fall. For there was religion then; and it was religion in the best and broadest sense, not a

system of observances limited to particular times and places ; but a life, in which reference was to be had to the good-pleasure and friendship of God in all that was done. In reading that portion of the Book of Genesis which pertains to man's life before the Fall, one cannot fail to note the absence of what are now regarded as purely devotional ideas, and the corresponding presence of natural and material ideas. God is the chief Speaker, and His converse is with sinless man whom He wishes to have always remain a devout and loving son ; yet there is no mention made of prayer and praise and similarly appropriate spiritual exercises. There is the sanctifying of the Sabbath, and the pointing out of the forbidden tree, and the divine injunction, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." ¹ But in the main the record speaks of things pertaining to common life. After the account of the making of the material world, and the fitting of it for comfortable occupancy, comes the account of the creation of man,—in the image of God and after His likeness, it is true—yet not to have the observance of certain rites and ceremonies set before him as the way by which he should mainly express his

sense of allegiance to God ; but on the contrary, the sinless pair were to utter forth their fealty to their Maker by taking proper charge of the works of His hands in the midst of which He had placed them. Instead of being required to make use of forms and symbols of worship, the only symbolical thing pointed out, was a thing they were specially commanded not to touch.¹ With regard to all other things, they were allowed the fullest liberty. They were divinely commissioned to "be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed ; to you it shall be for meat."²

Then together with the account of the planting of the Garden of Eden, and the watering of the garden, and the providing of "an help meet" for man, and the institution of marriage, there is an account of the definite purpose for which man was placed in

44 *OUR RELIGION AS IT WAS AND AS IT IS.*

the garden, namely, "to dress it and to keep it."¹ The impression left upon the mind by the reading of the scriptural account of man's pristine condition is, that it was the original design that man's life in this world should be a busy life,—busy in secular pursuits; a life of toil, but of toil that would always be pleasant, because engaged in under a sense of being in the employ of God, whose voice might occasionally be heard walking in the garden in the cool of the day, as man's Counsellor and Lord; so intimate a companionship existing between man and his Maker, that man would be supremely happy in the enjoyment of God's favour, and would know nothing experimentally of the meaning of living otherwise.

Such a picture is commonly regarded as only a pleasing dream of the past, the dream of a single night,—an ideal which was of necessity of very short duration, and which could not possibly have been realized beyond the precincts of Paradise. But we are bound to believe that this ideal might have been lastingly realized; that it could have obtained even until the human race had been in existence for centuries upon centuries, and had filled broad lands

with teeming millions of inhabitants. If not, how can it be claimed that man had a fair probation in Eden? It would have been most unreasonable to ask the sinless pair to increase and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it, and have dominion, if in the very nature of things it was impossible for all this to be done by sinless human beings. But there was no such inherent impossibility. We need only picture to ourselves sinless mankind busy toiling in all the varied fields of human industry, rejoicing in the Lord and taking counsel of Him concerning all things, and we have a faint representation of the race as it might have been. The theory held by some that it was necessary for man to fall before he could rise to the highest degree of virtue, is incorrect. It is not necessary that one first taste of sin before he can appreciate the blessedness of being free from sin. The finest appreciation of moral purity is obtained, not by having the taste first vitiated by contact with impurity, but by having the spirit becoming ever more and more refined, by dwelling constantly amid the purest scenes. And it is not by yielding to temptation, but by successfully resisting and

finally overcoming it, that the highest degree of moral strength is attained. The fall was a curse, not a blessing. The world has seen One who had the loftiest appreciation of the blessedness of being free from sin, yet who never knew sin ; and who as a man, grew strong for His great work, not by allowing the Tempter to gain some advantage, but by saying, "Get thee hence ;" and His words to man are, not to him that falleth, but, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." ¹ "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." ²

In the life of sinless man there would have been opportunities enough for the highest culture of man's moral nature, and ample scope also for the best exercise and development of both his mental and physical powers. Had the pristine condition of things remained unchanged, many of the present features of human life would have obtained as now, only that they would have existed in their perfection and free from all taint of sin. Business would have been transacted as really as now, only that all business relations and engagements would have been the true and honest intercourse of brother with

brother in the family of man. Men would have needed to pray as they do now, but there are some petitions they would never have required to offer. They would have said,—“Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy name; . . . Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; . . . And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; For Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory for ever. Amen.”¹ They would not have said, “Thy kingdom come;” for God’s kingdom would have been here, never having been set aside. Nor would they have said, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors;” for they would have had no sins to pardon, and no transgressing neighbours for themselves to forgive. And prayers would have differed in certain other respects from prayers now. They would have been uttered in a tone of loving confidence such as is not now breathed from even the holiest human heart. And requests would have been made concerning things which men too seldom pray for now. It would have been most natural for mankind to pray for information regarding the various mysteries around them in the natural world,

or for God's help and guidance in their endeavour to understand those mysteries for themselves. And under the consciousness of using God's world as His stewards, they would have entered upon the work of subduing the earth, and having dominion over nature in the spirit of true earnestness, and at each fresh discovery of the marks of divine wisdom and goodness, in any sphere of research or toil, a new thought of adoration would have filled the heart, and a new song of praise would have been uttered forth from the delighted soul.

Under circumstances such as these, mankind would have needed no set forms of worship. Their religion would have borne to be confined within no restricting limits. They would have obeyed both in the letter and in the spirit the Divine injunction : "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."¹ We make a distinction between man's work and the worship and service of God, but no such distinction would then have been made. We worship God by the reading of His word ; then, men would have worshipped Him as well by reading His great book of Nature, studying the works of His hand and the

thoughts of His mind in the heavens above and the earth beneath, or in the wondrous mechanism of their own beings. We worship God by singing to His praise and addressing Him in prayer in places set apart for the exclusive observance of such acts of devotion; they would have worshipped Him also by communing with Him freely as they guided the plough, or by chanting songs to His praise as they gathered home the sheaves. And yet the Sabbath, the day of delightful rest, would have come round from week to week, and would have been enjoyed to the full, in rest and song, and sweet communion with one another, and with the Lord.

With the human family thus employed—in the deep mine or on the mountain height, in the quiet vale or on the crowded street, in the house or by the way, by land or sea, guiding the plough, or wielding the axe, or striking with the hammer; fathoming the depths of heaven or exploring secret caverns where thoughts lie deep; manipulating the lightning or chaining all the strong forces of nature,—this natural world would have been one great harp of many strings, and toiling men and women—touching nature everywhere with their industry—

would have been God's quick-fingered players, striking skilfully this heaven-strung harp, and causing it to give forth glad music continually to the praise and glory of Him who is Master and King and Lord of all.

We are taught, both by written and unwritten revelation, that it was that the earth might be occupied and used in some such way as this, that it was originally framed and furnished; and it was that man might thus use the earth as God's steward, that he was created and placed upon it. Had the world been thus properly used from the beginning and onward, man would have perfectly fulfilled the great end of his being,—to glorify and enjoy God.

This was the primitive ideal of religion, and all God's appointments for the redemption of mankind, will be seen to have a return to this pure, practical, all-pervading religion and worship, continually in view. It is for this we are taught to pray when we say, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

IS.

layers,
caus-
to the
King

ritten
nt be
hat it
t was
ward,
d the
nning
d the
od.
d all
kind,
tical,
y in
when
wed
done

CHAPTER III.

THE BEGINNING OF FORMAL WORSHIP.



CHAPTER III.

THE BEGINNING OF FORMAL WORSHIP.

THE first acts of formal worship of which we have any intimation in Scripture, are recorded in the fourth chapter of Genesis, in the words: "And in process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect." ¹ Had there been any formal worship before the Fall, and had the Scriptures contained an account of it, that account would have been of the deepest interest to us. Not less interesting should be the account of the worship of Adam's sons shortly after the fall,—especially as the worship of one

of the sons was approved of God, and that of the other was not. The worship of Abel is of even more importance to us than the formal worship of Adam before the Fall would have been, in that Abel's was the worship of a sinful man, and as such was acceptable to God ; in it we may expect to find that which is essential to the rendering of any act of formal worship acceptable ; and in Cain's worship we may expect to find that which would render any act of formal worship valueless.

It is very commonly supposed that the excellence of Abel's offering consisted in the thing offered, one of the firstlings of his flock ; and that the inferiority and worthlessness of Cain's offering consisted also in the thing offered, the fruit of the ground. To suppose this, is to mistake the meaning of worship, and to forget that utterance which has been true from the beginning ;—"God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth."¹

Had God given commandment for the offering of an animal, and that alone, then it would have been pre-eminently right for Abel to have offered one of the firstlings of his flock, and wrong for Cain to

have offered fruit. Or if there were something essential to true worship, which could be represented by offering an animal, and not by offering fruit, then also might the unacceptableness of Cain's offering have consisted, in part at least, in the nature of the thing offered. But this cannot be claimed. If reference to the atoning death of Christ were essential to worship in that early time, such reference could be as appropriately made by the offering of the fruit of the ground as by the offering of an animal. The fruits of the earth were among the earliest forms of divinely appointed offerings; and they have been chosen by our Lord himself as most appropriate symbols, and most sacred emblems, both of His life and His death. "I am the true vine."¹ "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit."² "I am that bread of Life,"³ "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come."⁴

We must look elsewhere then, than to the nature of the gifts offered, for the acceptableness or unacceptableness of the first acts of formal worship.

We must consider the life, the character and the motives of the worshippers. In order to do this successfully, we must view them in the light of their own time, and be on our guard against attributing to Cain and Abel a familiar acquaintance with a revelation which was not given until long after their day. If we would understand the spirit in which they worshipped, we must look, not away forward to things of which they knew nothing, but back to things with which they were perfectly familiar;—taking into view, at the same time, as much of the light of after-revelation as is cast back upon that early time.

The parents of Cain and Abel had begun their life in innocency in the Garden of Eden, and had been on terms of most friendly intimacy with God while there. In an evil hour they had hearkened to the voice of the enemy, and the fellowship which had existed between them and God, was destroyed. They sinned and became sinful. But in that very hour God spoke kindly to them in the midst of much that was severe. They may not have fully understood His words. We do not imagine that the divine utterance,—“And I will put enmity between

thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel " ¹ had the same definiteness of meaning to Adam and Eve that it has to us. Yet they must have been encouraged by that utterance to believe that God was still on their side, and that by placing themselves trustfully in His keeping, all would yet be well with them ; and when the Lord God manifested His kindness by making them coats of skins and clothing them, their confidence in Him as their Father and Friend must have been greatly increased.

The most natural interpretation of Abel's subsequent conduct is, that he heard from his parents the story of their original relation to God, and the sad story of their Fall ; that he heard at the same time that God had spoken kindly to them, and had virtually invited them to call themselves still his children, and take Him still to be their God ; and that Abel believed all this and lived accordingly, regarding himself as one of God's children, the earth as the Lord's, and all things upon it to be used in accordance with His will. Abel therefore, sinful though he was, sought to obey the command given to his parents when they were first put in possession of

the world ;—" Replenish the earth and subdue it, and have dominion." ¹ Whether simply for the sake of having dominion according to the will of God ; or for the purpose of providing himself and others with clothing, and possibly with food ; or prompted in the kindness of his heart to care for God's defenceless creatures, the sheep, even as God cared for him,—or for what particular reason, we are not informed,—but Abel was a keeper of sheep. Entering upon this work with that view of his relation to God which his parents must have taught him, and which, in some of its features, must have found a tenderly sad response in his own heart, it was most natural that he should occasionally seek to express, in some visible and tangible way, his confidence in God as his merciful Father, and his acknowledgment of God's right in himself and in all that he had ; and in what way could he do this more appropriately, than by taking of the best of his flock and offering it as a gift to the Lord ? How this gift was presented we are not told ; whether on the bare ground, or on a rock, or upon what was afterwards called an altar. Nor do we know definitely whether it was presented alive or slain. We judge that it was

slain ; yet the Scripture narrative does not tell us this. The words,—“of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof,” may be properly interpreted to mean, “of the fattest of the firstlings of his flock.”* If we regard the words, “of the fat thereof,” as referring to the fatty parts of the animal as sacrificed, we import into this early portion of Scripture, ideas which properly belong to the Book of Leviticus,—which was not written until more than two thousand years after the days of Abel. It is true God may have revealed to Abel some things which are not recorded, and among them things pertaining to the manner of offering sacrifice, but we are not at liberty to base any argument upon such a conjecture. In our use of Scripture we are not allowed to read between the lines. We are specially commanded to use only the word that has been put into our hands. Nothing must be added and nothing taken away ; though this is not intended to forbid our reading any portion of Scripture in the light of all recorded circumstances, and in accordance with the whole tenor of revelation.

It has been supposed by some, that Abel's offering

* This is Keil's interpretation of the passage.

was a slain beast, from its being called a "sacrifice" in Hebrews xi. 4; but the word there translated sacrifice (*θυσίαν*, thusian), is sometimes applied to offerings that were not slain. Moreover, Abel's offering and Cain's are called by the same name in the original Hebrew; and the name *Minchah*, by which both are designated, is used especially of bloodless offerings. The Hebrew word for a bloody sacrifice is *Zevah*. Too much importance, therefore, must not be attached to the precise way in which Abel's gift was offered.

Neither are we told how his gift was accepted; whether by the Lord appearing in visible form; or by an audible voice telling Abel that his gift was approved; or by fire coming down from heaven and consuming the offering. We are simply told in the Old Testament that the Lord "had respect unto Abel and his offering"¹; and in the New, that Abel "obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts."²

We are uninformed also as to the opinion Abel had of the use the Lord could make of his gift, or of the value He would set upon it. It was possible for him to be in error regarding this. But however

this may have been, it was not the fact of his presenting an offering of a particular kind, nor in a particular outward way, nor even with a perfectly accurate conception either of its intrinsic or relative value in God's sight, that made Abel's offering acceptable; but it was the attitude of his heart and soul toward God. It was not by the observance of a certain form, but it was "by *faith* Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." ¹

But what is here meant by faith? Must we suppose that the word is to be understood in precisely its present theological sense, and that Abel's faith was a definite belief in the coming of One who should die for the sins of the world; and that accordingly, the excellence of his offering consisted in its being definitely typical of the death of the promised "seed of the woman"? Does Scripture warrant this supposition? We know that "without shedding of blood is no remission," ² and that the pouring out of the life-blood of animals is often represented in Scripture as typical of the shedding of the precious blood of Christ. We know that Christ is the only Redeemer of mankind; that "there is none other name under heaven given among men

whereby we must be saved.”¹ But we are taught also, that it is not an accurate knowledge of all the facts connected with the life and death of Jesus, that saves; nor is it a perfect acquaintance with the plan of redemption as revealed in Christ; but it is that intimate relation of the heart and life to God, which—whether man fully understands the basis of it or not—the name of Jesus, and that alone, has made it possible either for man to enter into, or for God to accept. When God calls little children away from this world to Himself, we believe they are saved, though they never understood or even heard the precious name; yet we believe their salvation is attributable solely to the fact, that Jesus is the “one Mediator between God and men.”² When a heathen who has never heard the gospel preached, reads carefully by the light of nature until he learns to understand something of “the invisible things” of God, “by the things that are made,”³ and in his consciousness of guilt in the sight of his Maker, becomes the subject of conviction of sin, through the power of that Spirit who worketh even as the wind bloweth,—confesses his sin in the sight of Heaven, seeks forgiveness of the

Great God, reposes confidence in Him, and manifests his faith by working righteousness; we are taught to believe that God—in accordance with His own plan of redemption, which He perfectly understands—can accept that man's faith, even though the man himself may not properly understand the reason why. We know that saving faith does not "stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God;"¹ that salvation is not based upon works, whether of the hands or of the head, but upon Divine wisdom and grace; and that the essential thing on man's part, is that "faith which worketh by love,"²—faith, not in a plan but in a person; confidence, not in a creed, but in God.

That the faith by which Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, was simple confidence in God, and not faith in its more technical sense, is further evident, from the definitions and illustrations of faith, contained in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. Faith is there defined to be the substance or confidence of things hoped for, the evidence or conviction of things not seen; but from the numerous and varied examples given in the chapter, of things which may be hoped for under

the definition there given of faith, or of "things not seen" which may come within its scope, it is manifest that it would be most illogical to argue that Abel's faith must have had reference directly, and consciously, to the typical significance of his offering, as symbolical of the death of the coming Substitute. In the sixth verse of the chapter, faith is defined as a belief in the existence of God, and confidence in Him as a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. To use the exact language of the verse:—"But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."¹ It is in the fourth verse of the same chapter that Abel's faith is mentioned; and we have no direct warrant from the whole chapter to say more than this, that Abel's faith was a firm belief in the existence of God; a loving confidence in Him as One who would be his Rewarder; and a heartfelt conviction that in some way known to him it might be—all he had right to hope for from God, would yet be fully realized. It was owing to this loving confidence and childlike trust, that Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacr

fice than Cain. The opposite view—held by many, and recently put forward anew*—that “the sin of Cain consisted in the fact that . . . he did not possess any feeling of estrangement or fear of the divine anger such as moved his brother,”¹—we must reject as entirely out of harmony with the whole Scripture narrative. The Bible nowhere reveals to us the slightest trace of any such estrangement existing in the heart of Abel. His worship was an act, not of oppressive fear, but of the very opposite, *faith*. His offering was not made for the purpose of working any change in the heart of God toward himself; or even of working a change in his heart toward God,—except in so far as it may have been designed to cherish and intensify the confidence and love, and other holy affections he already entertained. Instead of his sacrifice being designed to make his heart right toward God, it was the evidence that his heart was right.—“*By which he obtained witness that he was righteous*, the Lord testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh;”² and what he says to us is, that whoever would wor-

* Rev. Alfred Cave, in his work on “The Scriptural doctrine of Sacrifice,” page 41.

ship God acceptably, must come to Him in loving confidence as to the Friend of sinners, and with the earnest trust that He will prove a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. The recognising of sacrifice as a definite symbol of atonement, belongs to a later stage of Scripture history.

If we who live in the midst of the light of New Testament times, can not only confide in God as did the saints of the earliest days, but can also explain minutely the ground of our confidence, we should be duly thankful for this clearer latter-day light ; yet we are not at liberty to forget, that the essential thing is not the explanation of the ground of confidence, but confidence itself, that same loving confidence which made Abel's worship acceptable of old.

Cain's worship was of a very different kind. He also brought an offering unto the Lord ; but his offering was not accepted. Why ? Because it was not a lamb or a kid ? Cain had neither lambs nor kids ; he did not keep sheep ; he was a tiller of the ground ; the proper gift for him to bring therefore was fruit. Had Cain's heart been right, no exception would have been taken to his offering. " For

if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."¹

The fundamental defect in Cain's offering is to be found in the fact, that it was not the genuine utterance of a trusting heart; it was all outward; a mere form. We have many ways of learning this; and first, Cain's bringing an offering at all seems to have been a sort of imitating of what he had seen his brother Abel do. This does not appear in our version of the narrative, but in the original Hebrew the passage reads,—“And in process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel he also *had* brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering, but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect.”² The narrative implies,—that Abel's offering was first brought and accepted, and that Cain's offering was brought more tardily and rejected;—and that God had respect unto Abel's offering because He had respect unto Abel himself, and that He rejected Cain's offering because He rejected Cain himself.

We have further evidence of the cold, formal spirit in which Cain worshipped, in his bringing, not the best he had as Abel had done,—not the first-fruits, but simply “of the fruit of the ground.” Moreover, he was a wicked man, one who regarded iniquity in his heart. We learn this from his subsequent conduct which showed plainly what manner of spirit he was of; and this judgment of him is confirmed by the New Testament statement, that he “was of that wicked one.”¹ Cain’s heart was impious, and however correct as to time and place and form his act of worship may have been, it was worthless in the sight of God, because not performed in spirit and in truth. It was the mere husk and semblance of devotion, and was worse than valueless, for in that it professed to express heart homage where there was none, it was an hypocritical pretence.

But why such a difference between two brothers who had the same parents, and had also, it may be presumed, the same early training? If having been born so near the gates of Paradise, and so soon after the days of his parents’ innocency, and having heard from them the story of God’s mercy and grace, were

the natural reason for Abel's willing confidence in God,—should not Cain have been still more ready to trust his Heavenly Father, seeing he was the first-born? We might attribute this difference directly and solely to the inscrutable sovereignty of Divine grace, as in the case of Jacob and Esau¹; but God usually works in accordance with natural laws, and the difference between the characters of Cain and Abel may perhaps be accounted for in a perfectly natural way. Before the birth of Cain, his mother had met with Satan; had her heart corrupted with his wiles; had passed through all the dreadful experiences connected with the Fall; had heard her husband throw upon her the whole blame of their guilt; and had listened to the fearful curses pronounced upon the Serpent, the earth, her husband and herself in consequence;—Little wonder that her first-born son was “of that wicked one,” a man of cruel heart and bloody hand. In a way quite as natural might we perhaps account for the meeker and more docile disposition of Abel, who was born of a chastened spirit and beneath more hopeful skies. Beginning life with different natural temperaments, from whatever cause, the two sons would be differ-

ently affected by the same course of training. The human mind, like a magnet, draws from the heap of filings the metals for which it has affinity. If its affinities are with things that are lovely and of good report, it will choose these things from among the mass; if its affinities are more strongly with things that are base, it will as certainly draw to itself these. Thus the good man becomes his own instructor in virtue, while the bad man schools himself into deeper mysteries of vice. "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away, even that he hath."¹ From the story told him by his parents, concerning their innocence and fall, and the mingled displeasure and kindness of God, the heart of Abel would draw such thoughts as would tend to cherish and increase his filial trust in God; while the mind of Cain would draw only that which would foster and intensify his feeling of aversion; he would dwell chiefly upon the curse. So that at length, when Abel brought an offering to the Lord, he came in faith and under the promptings of love; while Cain came in fear, out of a cold sense of duty,

or still worse, because he believed God was not his Friend, and felt that he must do something to appease His anger and merit His good-will. And so, thus early in the history of humanity, do we find the doctrine of faith and the doctrine of works set over against each other, and both are manifested in the same way, namely, through forms of worship. And thus also are we taught from the first, that we may expect to find hypocrisy and disguised wickedness, as certainly as truth and righteousness, in connexion with the professed worship of God. Wherever acts of devotion are not the spontaneous expression of reverence and love, really existing in the heart, there is likely to be, not simply error lurking among them, but also a germ of wickedness, concealed it may be from the worshipper himself, yet ready to spring up and curse the world.

It has been from among acts of worship thus performed, that there has sprung the bitterest enmity, the deadliest hatred, the most cruel persecution in the name of religion. In this, Cain has had a large following. He has built a city and called it by a pious name, but its inhabitants have been Cainites.

Abel's religion was a life of friendship with God,

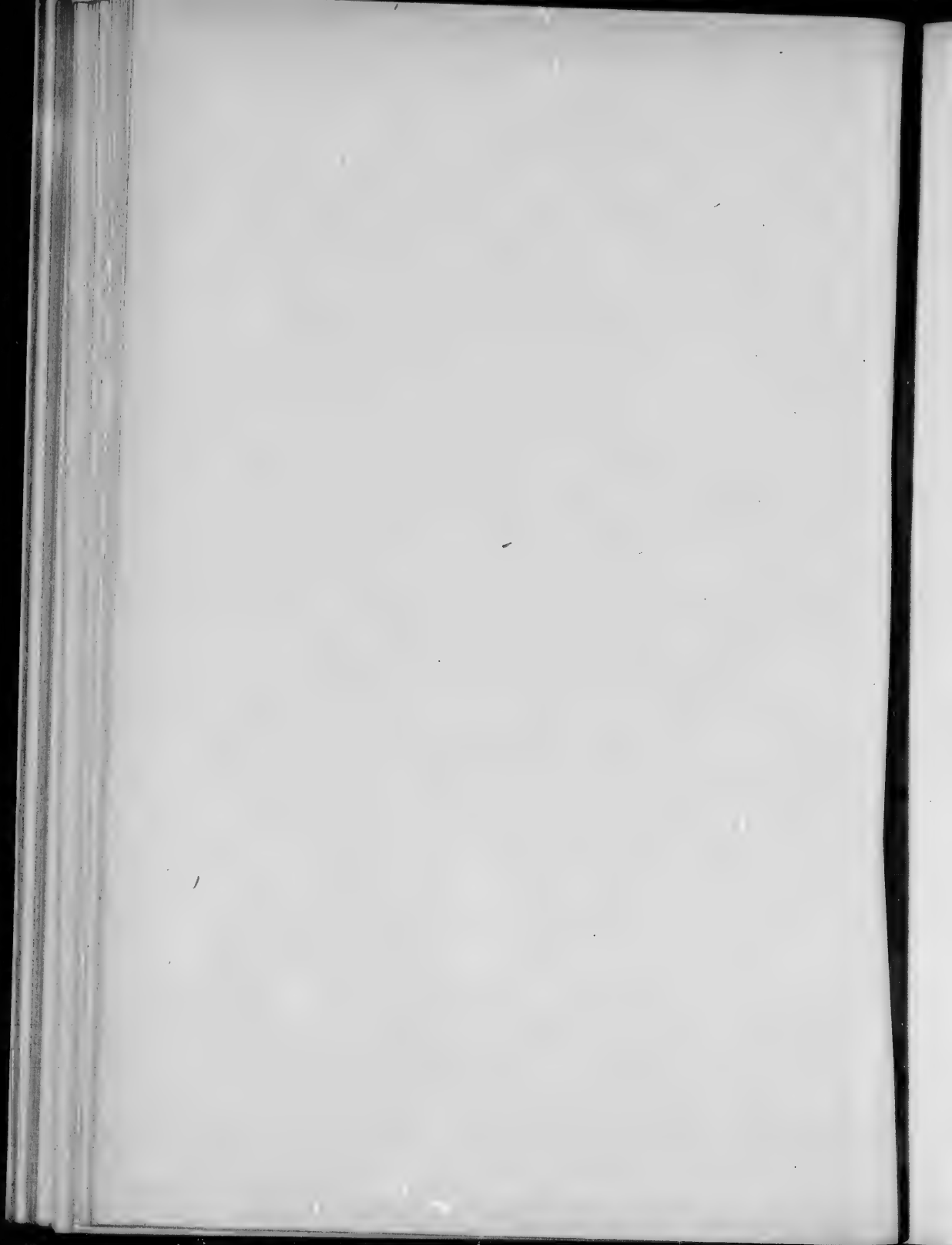
friendship which was not unconscious of sinfulness and the deepest unworthiness, but which sought ways of expressing humble confidence in God, and of maintaining intimate fellowship with Him as the sin-forgiving Father. The feeling in Abel's heart has been reproduced in the prophetic utterance:—"O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." ¹

Cain's religion consisted in a spirit of fear and distrust, which found expression in the observance of certain forms, prompted in part by a spirit of imitation, and in part by the feeling that something must be done, and which, in so far as they had any spiritual significance, betrayed a sinful want of confidence in the Being to whom they were offered.

Abel's was that delightful kind of heart worship to which our race must yet return; Cain's was a sin-begotten innovation, and was the original type after which much of the worship, which has been in the world from that day to this, has been modelled.

CHAPTER IV.

ORIGIN AND USE OF "SACRED THINGS," AND "PLACES OF WORSHIP."





CHAPTER IV.

ORIGIN AND USE OF "SACRED THINGS," AND "PLACES OF WORSHIP."

BY the term "sacred things" is commonly meant things which are used only in connection with the worship of God, or which have in some way been specially set apart to His service. The word *sacred* is used in a wider and less definite sense, however. It is applied indiscriminately to things entitled to reverence, relating to God, relating to religion in general. It is not a Bible word; it does not occur once in our version of the Scriptures. Even its synonym *holy* is not used in all that part of the Bible which covers the first twenty-three centuries of the world's history, the book of Genesis. It is found for the first time in Exodus iii. 5:—"Put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

In the beginning there was no need for set forms of worship; there were therefore no sacred symbols. Work was worship and all things were alike sacred. Holiness to the Lord was written upon everything, as it will be yet again, upon things pertaining to every department of human life, whether to business, pleasure, or what is now termed worship. "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of Hosts." ¹

In the garden of Eden there was a tree whose fruit was forbidden; but there was no Holy of Holies. And even after mankind were driven out of the garden, the same thing was true of the whole earth for many centuries. Worship was free and all-pervading. Since God had spoken kindly to men, and encouraged them to believe that He was still their God, the pious of those early days trusted Him as their Friend, and held intimate communion with Him in all manner of places, under a tree near the tent door, or by a fountain of water in the wilderness, or by a well at Padan Aram; wherever night hap-

pened to overtake the traveller, there was his Bethel, his Mahanaim, his Peniel. If an altar was to be built, it must be built of rough stones, such as could be gathered in any part of that stony country; and it might be erected anywhere, in the plain of Mamre, or on the top of Mount Moriah, or wherever the worshipper chanced to be. Those were the days when men "walked with God" and worshipped Him beneath the open sky, believing that He was to be found everywhere, and everywhere alike. Like some of a later day, they saw God's smile in the sunlight, they heard His voice in the thunder, the lightnings that lightened the world were His lightnings, the great rivers were rivers of God, the mighty cedars were trees of the Lord's planting, the cattle upon a thousand hills were His, and the heaven, even the heavens were the Lord's. Religion was to men as their meat and their drink. It was inwoven with their daily life; their worship could be restricted to no particular places or forms, their ploughing was holy as their prayers. In the Book of Genesis, therefore, we read of no particularly sacred place or sacred thing, no ark of the covenant, no tabernacle no temple, no church. And even for a time after

the close of the history contained in the Book of Genesis, there appears no trace of any disposition on the part of God's people, to associate the thought of His presence and favour exclusively with any humanly fashioned symbol. It was otherwise with the nations lying around Palestine, and even with some of the tribes inhabiting the Holy Land. The germs of idolatry which are to be found lurking in the motive that had prompted the building of the tower of Babel, took root in many soils and brought forth abundant fruit. The gods which Rachel stole from her father's house in Padan Aram, and brought with her to Canaan, were part of that fruit; but it appears to have perished when brought to the Land of Promise; it did not bloom in Jacob's family.

And long after Jacob's death, and in another land, there was still one at least, who could commune with God beneath the open sky as his fathers from of old had done. The rock-ribbed hills of the desert of Madian were the walls of the temple in which the shepherd Moses worshipped; the blue canopy of heaven was its dome, and the burning bush was the book from whose flaming leaves God spake to him. And when Moses was chosen of God

to lead His people forth from their bondage, the only sacred symbol he was commissioned to take with him, to the accomplishment of his task, was the staff on which he had leaned in the discharge of his daily duties, the rod which had been of service to him as he tended his father-in-law's flocks.

What then was the origin of the places of worship, and the sacred things which obtained not long afterward among the chosen people? The origin of these things is to be found in connection with the residence of the children of Israel in Egypt. "Temples first come before the eye of history in heathen, not Hebrew records, among the monuments of Egypt and Assyria." "Men who walked with God everywhere as did Abraham, and received manifestation of His presence by ministry of angels, and visions of the night, were not likely to be the first to conceive of that compromise with a distant Deity, which is the idea of the temple."¹ "An increasing sense of being under the wrath of God, and of distance from God; an impression that earth and time, as connected with man, are unholy, in course of time wrought the belief that God will not come near to listen to the solicitations of man, except in times set apart as

holy, and upon consecrated ground. An area designated by some consecrating ceremonies constituted the first temple. It was merely a sacred spot in the field, and in the air about it. To surround that spot with a cord or some other visible boundary, then to erect a tent within its limits for convenience of the person conducting the worship, were natural steps in the history." ¹ May we not follow the history a little farther, and see in a modern church with its tower or spire, a full grown development of the tent erected for the convenience of the ancient worshipper, together with the pillar or heap of stones he was accustomed to set up to the honour of his God, or in commemoration of some solemn oath or vow there taken; only that now the pillar or heap of stones has lost much of its original significance, and instead of being erected beside the tent, is erected upon it? But our modern places of worship have been modelled after more ancient Jewish temples and synagogues; we must therefore trace the connection between these and corresponding sacred places and things among the Egyptians.

The long sojourn of the Children of Israel in Egypt, among a people who regarded their gods

not as friends but as enemies whose anger needed to be appeased, had in course of time the effect of destroying that sense of companionship with God which His people had formerly loved to cherish. The germ of that estrangement from God which cast its shadow over the whole worship of the Egyptians, is native to the heart of fallen man, and was already lurking in the Hebrew mind, and needed but the light of heathen example, and the various fostering influences of Egyptian bondage, to cause it to develop into a feeling of total alienation. Accordingly, under all these adverse influences, the chosen people soon began to feel that they could no longer walk with God in spirit, and worship Him everywhere as their fathers had done, but must have certain sacred places, things, and times, by which God might receive them to His presence and communion. Without these they felt that it would be in vain for them to presume to approach Him. In pity for their weakness, therefore, God instructed Moses to make the Tabernacle, and Table of Shewbread, and the Ark of the Covenant, and all the sacred vessels to be used in formal worship. It seems to have been in Egypt that they found the idea of the ark,

and the tabernacle, and several other features of worship, which were by Divine appointment woven into their ritual—an evidence of the transcendent compassion of God in adapting His redemptive provisions to human frailty. “We need not go to heathen records,” says Dean Stanley, “for the assurance that Moses was ‘learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.’ Whatever that wisdom was, we cannot doubt it was turned to its own good purpose in the laws through him revealed to the people of God. The very minuteness of the law implies a stage of existence different from that in which the Patriarchs had lived. but like to that in which we know that the Egyptians lived. The forms of some of the most solemn services—as, for example, the Scapegoat—are almost identical. The white linen dresses of the priests, the Urim and Thummim on the high-priest’s breast-plate, are, to all appearance, derived from the same source as the analogous emblems amongst the Egyptians. The sacred ark, as portrayed on the monuments, can hardly fail to have some relation to that which was borne by the Levites at the head of the host, and which was finally enshrined in the Temple. The Temple, at least in some of its most

remarkable features,—its courts, its successive chambers, and its adytum, or Holy of Holies,—is more like those of Egypt than any others of the ancient world with which we are acquainted. In these and in many other instances we may fairly trace a true affiliation of such outward customs and forms, as in like manner at a later period the Christian Church took from the Pagan ritual of the empire in which it had sojourned for its four hundred years. It is but an expansion of the one fact which has always arrested the attention of commentators, and which in its widest sense, is a salutary warning against despising the greatness and the wisdom of the heathen.

‘ This world of thine, by him usurped too long,

Now opens all her stores to heal thy servants’ wrong.’

Rachel carried off her father’s teraphim from Mesopotamia; the wives and daughters of Israel carried off from Egypt the sacred gems and vestments, which afterwards served to adorn the priestly services of the Tabernacle. ‘ When ye go ye shall not go empty. But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour . . . jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and raiment, and ye shall put them upon

your sons and upon your daughters . . . And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required, and they spoiled the Egyptians.'

Yet the contrast was always greater than the likeness. When we survey the vast array of ancient ideas represented to us in the Egyptian temples and sepulchres, the thought forced upon us is rather of the fewness than of the frequency of the illustrations which they furnish."¹

But while the outward form of several of the sacred symbols of the Jewish ritual, was closely analogous to that of corresponding heathen symbols, the whole inner life and meaning was changed and immeasurably elevated. This is in harmony with God's method of working everywhere. In the great realm of nature "Fishes, reptiles, birds and mammals, predecessors of man, presented in their frames, anticipations of more perfect structures which characterize *him*. They had arrangements to protect the eye and the organ of hearing, a long vault to contain the brain, and limits for various functions necessary to their well-being. 'It is evident,' says Agassiz, 'that there is a manifest progress in the suc-

cession of beings on the surface of the earth. This progress consists in an increasing similarity to the living fauna ; and among the vertebrata, especially in their increasing resemblance to man. But this connection is not the consequence of a direct lineage between the faunas of different ages. There is nothing like parental descent connecting them.' " 1

As in the Vegetable and Animal Kingdoms there is a gradually ascending series of typical forms, in which each higher order has been made to copy something from the next lower, until man is reached ; yet the life and spirit animating man is infinitely higher than that of any of the lower forms :—So the ark, and the tabernacle, and the priestly vestments of the Jews, though by Divine appointment copying something from similar symbols in use among the heathen, were made to possess a spiritual significance which was infinitely higher.

All the appointments of the early Jewish ritual, instead of teaching the people to imitate the worship of the Egyptians, were so arranged as to lead the worshippers away from the false heathen notions of Deity with which they had become too familiar, and

back to the true view of Jehovah as the holy God, yet the Friend of man.

The Tabernacle—Jehovah's tent—taught them that God was so much their Friend that He was willing to dwell among them. In that it was like their own tents, not permanently fixed, but movable, as was befitting their migratory life, it told them of God's omnipresence, and of the constancy of His kindness and protecting care. It was from the Tabernacle Moses was taught to begin his most sublime prayer with the words, "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." ¹

The sacrifices to be offered in connection with the Tabernacle service, kept the people in remembrance of the holiness and justice of God, of the claim He had upon them and all they possessed,—kept them in mind of their own sinfulness as well, and were at the same time suggestive types of the way by which God could be the just God and yet their Saviour.

The ark of the Covenant, intimately associated as it was with the Book of the Law, taught them with what reverence they must ever regard God's word and will—not to speak of the precious significance of the mercy seat ; and, with its pot of manna and

its budding rod, it taught them also how sacredly they must evermore cherish the remembrance of all past favours received from God. The idea of associating God's presence and service exclusively with those symbols, was not to be for a moment entertained. On the contrary, one great end which all those sacred things were designed to serve was, to lead the people out to wider views of the nature and character of God, and to teach them again how to walk with Him and worship Him everywhere. This was conspicuously true at a later time of the Temple and all its appointments. The idea of localizing God's favour, and confining His presence to a particular building, was not in the mind of Solomon when he built the Temple,—even though at its dedication he addressed to Jehovah the words: "I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever."¹ Read the twenty-seventh verse of that same eighth chapter of First Kings: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold! the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded!"

What the builder of the Temple aimed at was, not the localizing of the presence of God, but the cen-

tering of the thoughts and affections of the people upon Him as their God wherever they might be ; and especially teaching them to associate the thought of God intimately and tenderly with their home, their country and their nation, that they might thus be kept from ever having their minds corrupted again by the false notions of Deity prevailing either among the Egyptians or among any other heathen people with whom they might at any time be made to dwell. This is implied throughout the whole of Solomon's dedicatory prayer. "If thy people go out to battle against their enemy whithersoever thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the Lord toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for thy name. Then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause. If they sin against thee (for there is no man that sinneth not), and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near ; yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives,

saying: We have sinned and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; and so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name: Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling-place, and maintain their cause. . . . For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth to be thine inheritance, as thou spakest by the hand of Moses thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord God." ¹

That this was the true idea of the Temple is indicated with equal clearness in the words of blessing with which Solomon closed his dedicatory prayer:—"The Lord our God be with us *as he was with our fathers*; let him not leave us, nor forsake us. That all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God, and that there is none else. Let your heart therefore be perfect with the Lord our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandment as at this day." ²

For confirmation of this view of the general meaning of the Temple, call to mind the ardent attachment of devout Jews to the worship of the true God during the long years of their captivity. Listen while they sing, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." ¹ Or join with the Jews as they go up to the great yearly festival after their return from exile, singing:—"I was glad when they said unto me: let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." ² Their attachment to their sacred places, things, and times, had thus, by Divine appointment, been the means of keeping them from wandering from God while surrounded by heathen influences.

We have thus far seen that the symbols employed by the Jews in the worship of God were not in use from the beginning. God's people had worshipped Him acceptably for many centuries without those symbols. We have observed that "sacred things" owe their origin to man's sinfulness and his increasing sense of estrangement from God; but that their use as symbols of worship is of Divine appointment, and is a manifestation of that depth of Divine pity, by reason of which God adapts the provisions of His grace to man's increasing need. We have noted that the origin and outward form of the symbols themselves are matters of minor importance; that the thing of essential value is the inner spiritual meaning which the outward form is made to express.

It has been indicated also that "sacred things" and "places of worship" are not things of eternal necessity, but are only temporary expedients employed to lead men back to a condition from which they have lapsed, and that their use will cease when they have served their day. Had men been able to maintain and exercise a proper sense of the holiness, justice and love of God, without the use of

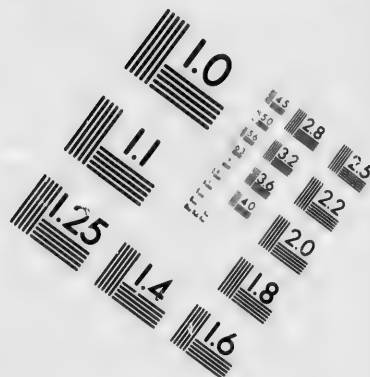
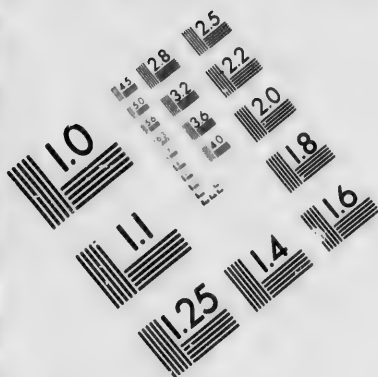
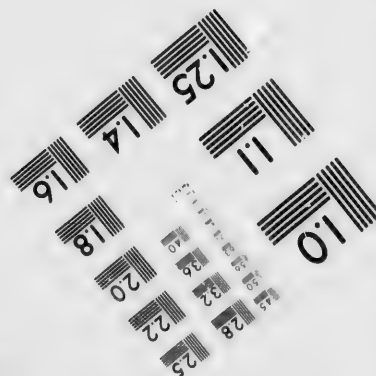
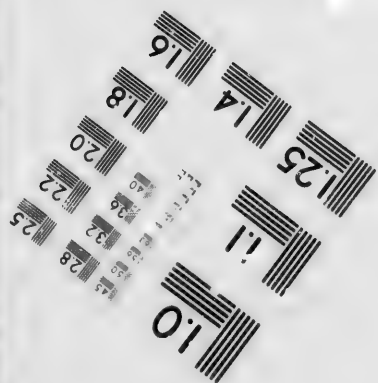
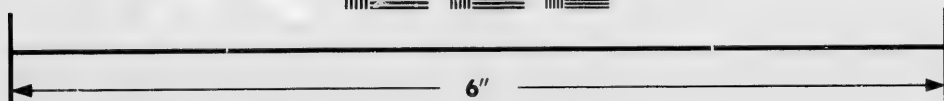
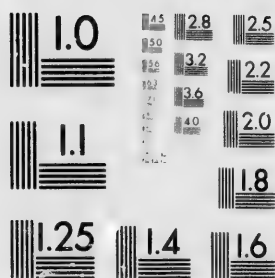


IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)



Photographic
Sciences
Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

4.5 28
3.2 2.5
3.6 2.2
2.0
8

10

symbols, the use of symbols would never have been Divinely appointed. Could the chosen people have continued to worship in spirit and in truth in connection with their daily use of the things of this life, there would have been no need for the appointment of specified places and forms. And when the forms of worship now in use, shall have fully accomplished their true end, worship will thereafter consist not so much in the occasional use of set times and things, as in holding communion with God everywhere, and in living unto Him in purity of heart and uprightness of life in the midst of the proper use of the present world.



ve
ble
th
of
he
ad
ve
ill
se
n
n
st

CHAPTER V.

THE HOUSEHOLD, THE CHURCH, AND
RELIGIOUS CONVERSATION.



CHAPTER V.

THE HOUSEHOLD, THE CHURCH, AND RELIGIOUS CONVERSATION.

IN reading that portion of the Bible which covers the first twenty-three centuries of the world's history, we find no mention of the gathering of people together to listen to preaching, or to engage in prayer and praise and similar devotional exercises, as people gather now. Noah was commissioned to warn men of the coming of the flood, and in this capacity he is called a "Preacher of righteousness;"¹ and it is possible that Noah erected a pulpit, and that people gathered about him in great numbers to hear his message of warning, and that he argued long and earnestly from week to week in support of his message, deducing illustrations from the fearful corruption of the age, and the judgments that were even then overtaking many

on account of their iniquities. It is more probable, however, that Noah's cry of warning was uttered as at a later day Jonah's was—the preacher going up and down the streets and crying, Yet so many days and the flood shall come. But however this may be, the preaching of Noah was entirely exceptional ; it was an extraordinary necessity, arising out of the abuse of the family relation. “ And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair ; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh, yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.”¹ Had the family relation been maintained in its purity, the preaching of Noah would never have been called for.

But though there was no regular public preaching in those early times, there was a regularly ordered way of imparting religious instruction. Owing to the free and all-pervading nature of religion, no distinction was made between religious instruction and useful information of any kind.

Instruction pertaining to all departments of human conduct was given as occasion required, in connection with the ordinary duties of life. Directions concerning the tenure of property, and the offering of sacrifice, and the tilling of the fields, and the observance of the rite of circumcision, were interblended and woven together as being alike important in the serving of the Lord. And there was provision made for having wise instruction regarding all these things properly transmitted as the years rolled by. The home was the school; the father was the teacher. The household was also the church, and the father was the minister. It was through home training a nation was to become great; it was through household religion that all families of the earth were to be blessed. The sum of what the Bible of the first two thousand years teaches upon this subject is contained in the words, "Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him; For I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which

He hath spoken of him."¹ In harmony with this idea we find it recorded in the next to the last chapter of Genesis, that the dying Jacob gathered his sons around his bedside, and addressed them one by one in the language and spirit of prophecy, and gave them his parting blessing. And in the following chapter we read that "Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father's house. And Joseph lived an hundred and ten years. And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation; the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph's knees."²

What then was the origin of what is now termed the Congregation? The origin of the Church in this collective and personal sense, is to be found where we have already found the origin of the Church in the individual and local sense, namely, in the bondage in Egypt. During the sojourn of the children of Israel in Egypt, the rights of parents were so sadly interfered with that the family ceased to be the centre of religious influence. Through contact with the heathen, and through the degradation of slavery, the parents themselves lost the true idea of religion, and needed to be re-instructed before

they could become the teachers of their households. Hence the need of the institution of the Church in the sense of the congregation. It was necessary that men such as Moses and Aaron, Nahab and Abihu, Caleb and Joshua, and the priests and elders in general, should be raised up by God to be public teachers. As teachers were few it was necessary that the people should often be gathered in great numbers to listen to the teaching of one man. But it was not the intention that this should be the sole method of imparting religious instruction, or even the chief method. It was rather an expedient, designed to restore the original influence of the household. While the public teacher imparted knowledge in its varying forms, he was careful to add the exhortation:—"Thou shalt teach these things diligently unto thy children."¹ The household, and not the Church—the family circle, and not the public assemblage—was still to be the chief scene and centre of religious training and instruction.

But together with the household and the Church—binding them both in one, and rendering the instruction imparted by both more practical, there

was another divinely appointed means of cultivating religious life and knowledge—religious conversation.

The nature of true religious conversation depends upon the nature of true religion. And true religion is not a mere system of doctrines, nor a bundle of impulses and emotions ; nor does it consist in the sum of all the religious services a man attends, and all the prayers he offers, and all the hymns he sings, and all the chapters of the Bible he reads,—though all these are important adjuncts of religion. Religion is a life. It consists in the giving of the heart's best love to God, and then living unto God every day and hour under the secret promptings of this love. Not that a man is to carry about with him any emotions which are unnatural, or any manner of speech or of general deportment which savours of the affected and the unreal ; but that he is to be a good and true man, having a sincere regard to the presence and honour of God, as the foundation of his whole life ; and having an inward consciousness of being restored to terms of such intimate fellowship with God as to lead him, without effort, and even without premeditation, to delight in the thought of God

and of his relationship to Him. Such a manner of living, producing appropriate results both in the moulding of the inner character, and the shaping of the outward conduct, is what we understand by a religious life. Such a life will have its set times for observing what are known as strictly religious duties. It will have its hours for prayer and song, and the reading of the Word of God ; and it will attend upon these exercises diligently and with delight. But these are only its meal times' and its pastimes. The staple of such a life is to be found elsewhere,—amid the cares of the household, the workshop or the street,—where prayer will still be offered, but offered for the most part in the secrecy of the heart ; where songs may still be sung, but sung chiefly with the silent melody of the soul ; where God's word and will can still be read, not from the pages of His written revelation, but from the pages of the Old Testament of nature, and the New Testament of His daily providence ; and where other forms of worship may be delightfully observed—every relation of life becoming suggestive of some higher truth,—every object which the eye can look upon or the hand can handle, becoming a

symbol of worship containing for the truly religious heart some precious thought of God.

If this is religion, what is religious conversation, and where is it to be found? It is not to be found in the services of the Church. As a rule the worshippers do not converse together in those services. Of necessity such services must be orderly and formal. The idea of freedom and familiarity and the absence of constraint, is a prominent feature of conversation in the common acceptance of the term. We shall best understand where and how religious conversation may be engaged in, by considering its character and general scope. There is a kind of religious conversation which cannot be commended. It is hypocritical, and unnatural, and unsavoury to common sense. But because certain ways of speaking familiarly about religious concerns are false, it is not to be argued that therefore all ways are false. On the contrary, the false proves the existence of the true.

True religious conversation will have a great breadth of range. It will not be confined exclusively to the gospel, nor to the respective merits of conflicting doctrines, nor to the subject of missions,

nor to church work in general, nor even to the all-important question of the eternal destiny of the immortal spirit, and the importance of every man attending without delay to the matter of the safety of his own soul. All these are questions of the utmost moment, yet they pertain chiefly to only one side of religious life. For religion has two sides, a heavenward side and an earthward side; a side which deals chiefly with spiritual things, and a side which deals mainly with natural things. As to its earthward side, it is a life that is lived in accordance with the divine injunction, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." ¹ And by doing things to the glory of God is not to be understood doing them with some mystic accompaniment of thought and emotion. It is doing them in accordance with the Divine intent;—abusing nothing, but using all things and all relations in conformity with the Divine law and will, and form a devout regard to that will—not through fear but in loving confidence—so that all that is done shall tend to manifest forth the Divine perfections.

If we would know the full scope of religious

conversation, we have only to turn to the moral law, and measure its breadth as we find it indicated in the words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself."¹ If we examine the Ten Commandments to know what is included within this great field which has the Life of God for its boundary on one side, and the life of man for its boundary on the opposite side, and the two-fold lines of love as the connecting boundaries between we find that these commandments relate to everything which can come within the sphere of man's life, both here and hereafter; to our allegiance to God; to our methods of worshipping; to proprieties of speech; to the Sabbath in all its breadth; to every feature of man's relation to his fellowman,—including business, pleasure, political life,—everything.

In this great field we find the proper topics for religious conversation. This is no mere conjecture. We have it on the direct authority of God. Immediately after delivering the law He added the command:—"And these words which

I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." ¹ To obey this command means, to have genuine religious conversation form an important part of all our conversation; or rather, it is to converse about all matters in the spirit of true religion. It is difficult for us in these late days, and in this western world to see how this can be done. Yet it can be done, otherwise no such command would have been given in connection with that law which is universally binding. God's people seem to have found little difficulty in regulating their conversation in accordance with this command in early Scripture times. In the thirty-first chapter of Genesis we hear Laban and Jacob talking together over business matters. Laban is displeased, but the thought of God's presence tempers his anger, and he says to Jacob: "It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt, but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad," ² Jacob

replies sharply, even bitterly, closing his reply with the words: "Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight."¹

It may perhaps seem as though the men were only quarrelling in the name of the Lord, as men sometimes do still. Yet it was not so. The sense of the relation they sustained to one another in God's sight tamed their wayward hearts, and brought them to most tender reconciliation. "Laban answered and said unto Jacob, These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest is mine: And what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have born? Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou."² So Jacob took a stone and set it up for a pillar, and they gathered stones and made an heap. "And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee. This heap be witness and this pillar be witness, that I will not

pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me for harm. The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father judge betwixt us. And Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac."¹

Or if we turn to the Book of Ruth which is full of the conversation of men and women of a later time, we cannot fail to observe how naturally and pleasantly the thought of the presence of God is interwoven with all that is said and done. If Naomi speaks to her daughters-in-law, she says: "Go return each to her mother's house; the Lord deal kindly with you as ye have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant you that ye may find rest each of you in the house of her husband."² Or if Boaz comes out from Bethlehem to see his reapers, his salutation to them is: "The Lord be with you;"³ and their response is, "The Lord bless thee."⁴ Or if Boaz commends Ruth for the kind and wise course she has taken, it is in the words: "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."⁵ It is not enough to say that this characteristic of oriental

speech is owing simply to the highly poetic character of the oriental mind, and that little account need be taken of it, inasmuch as a similar style of speech is to be found even among some of the wandering Arabs to-day. It is manifest that this habit of thought and speech owed its existence originally to that constant sense of the overshadowing presence of God, which is so marked a feature of the earliest Scripture times.

It is not claimed that the devout weaving of Divine titles and other sacred words into human speech, will have the effect of making men what they should be. It is possible for a man to take oath in the name of God with seemingly the deepest reverence, and at the same time act as basely as ever Jacob did in the days of his meanness and duplicity. But let the heart first be right, and right to such an extent that the spirit of worship is infused into the whole life, and the man whose life is thus pervaded by the truly religious spirit will be likely, in his ordinary speech, to make an honest, natural, manly reference to the Great God and Father whose world he is using, and to the will and word and law of Him from whose constant kindness

he receives all that he enjoys,—which is living in accordance with the Scripture rule.

Is it said that the speech of such a man would savour of weakness? In the speech of the good men whose conversation is recorded in scripture there is nothing weak. The men who in conversing upon the affairs of state, or of ordinary business, prefixed their utterances with a "Thus saith the Lord," were men of strong characters and wills of iron. We need them back again. There are good and true men in the world to-day, whose conduct and conversation is a marked approximation toward the Scriptural standard. But it seems likely to be long before any considerable proportion of mankind shall have attained to this Divine ideal of religion, and this Scriptural standard of conversation. The spirit of the age in every country is, as yet, worldly—not godly. Practically the thought of God's presence and oversight has been banished from the scenes of busy life. Work is work, and not in any proper sense worship. The precept which requires that all shall be done to the glory of God, is scarcely recognised even as a theory. The thought of God is utterly foreign to secular scenes. When intro-

duced into ordinary conversation it seems out of place because out of its element, away from its proper surroundings—new cloth on an old garment.

This is a state of things which the Church with its present appointments seems powerless to remedy. In fact, the idea commonly entertained of the exclusive sanctity of the Church and its services, is more likely to widen the breach between work and worship, than to heal it. And if the public services of the sanctuary are not faithfully supplemented by this third divinely appointed means of spiritual culture, religious conversation, this must inevitably be the result. In certain respects the instruction publicly imparted in the Church, is of value as the lecture from the professor's chair is of value. But no student ever became skilled in his profession by simply listening to lectures. There must afterwards be the asking and answering of questions; there must be the applying of abstract principles to actual cases, there must be the closest personal intercourse. If ever religion is to be so learned that it will become real religion—practical religion—they that fear the Lord must speak often one to another. It is of the first importance, therefore, that men learn

how to talk freely and naturally in the name of the Lord. God has provided a school in which at least the rudiments of this highest of all arts may be acquired. That school is the home—the original centre of religious life and influence. There, and there alone, can business and devotion be properly made to begin to blend. They can meet in the home from day to day as they can meet nowhere else. While the members of the family converse together upon the various scenes and incidents of life, the goodness of God can be freely and happily acknowledged, His guidance can be sought, and His blessing asked upon all the business and all the pleasures in which the members of the household have any part. The names of the Father, Son, and Spirit can become the sweetest of household words.

And while God has provided this best of all schools, He has at the same time set apart for man one day in seven for the special culture of this true practical religion. The family and the sabbath are sister institutions; they were born together in Eden; they went hand in hand in the days of man's innocency. They were both given to

man at the first to be of special benefit to him in the use he was commanded to make of this world, and they should be similarly helpful still. The Scriptures teach us that to this end the public services of the day must be faithfully and joyfully waited upon; but at the same time the sabbath must be made the most delightful of home days. Its rest must be sweetened by the fragrance of home love and home joy: and at some hour during the day, the household should all assemble for the interested reading of the word, and for communion together upon the relation of the household and all its interests to God; not with an eye to business, which would be work; but for the purpose of bringing the hearts and lives of all into more intimate companionship with God,—which is the truest worship. And if only the spirit of fellowship with God be maintained, there is no department of man's work as God's steward in this world, which may not be made the topic of conversation during this most sweet and sacred hour. And if the conversation be interspersed with prayer and song, deep and heartfelt, yet unconstrained and free as the speech of childhood, Eden and Heaven will not be far away.

CHAPTER VI.

DECLINE OF EARLY SCRIPTURAL RELIGION,
WITH ATTEMPTS AT RESTORATION.



CHAPTER VI.

DECLINE OF EARLY SCRIPTURAL RELIGION, WITH ATTEMPTS AT RESTORATION.

WHEN the children of Israel had their ideas of religion and worship corrupted in Egypt, and God became their Teacher, in the instruction given them three ends were kept in view :—the banishing of error and wickedness from among them ; the begetting of confidence and love in their hearts toward God ; and the instituting of such observances as would, if properly used, be the means of securing these ends, and be at the same time the means of keeping them from ever wandering from God again, whether through contact with surrounding nations or otherwise. The appointments of the Jewish ritual, so skilfully designed to accomplish these ends, were of value only in as far as they did so. They were of no value in themselves. They

were not instituted to be attended to as outward observances which might be regarded as well-pleasing to God. "I spake not unto your fathers nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the Land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices."¹ These were but pictures and shadows. "Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." That was the real thing all these appointments were designed to teach.

But "they hearkened not nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward."² They wandered farther and farther from the primitive ideal of religion, and from the simplicity of the worship of the earliest times; and in their treatment of God and His methods of worship they acted the part of foolish children. Failing to understand that which was of chief value in the book God placed before them, they were for a while pleased with the pictures,—the types, the symbols and forms; but soon they grew weary of even these and began to deface and destroy the book. They overlooked the printed matter, the commandments,

the statutes and judgments, and in course of time abused and degraded their whole ritual.

The ways of abusing sacred things are mainly three : First, making use of them in such a way as to cause them to blot out of the mind the idea of the omnipresence of God. This was one of the earliest mistakes made by the Jews. They began to associate the thought of God's presence and favour exclusively with their sacred places, symbols, and times. They came to think that God was near them when they worshipped Him in connection with the ark, and the tabernacle, and the holy day, and distant when they were not so employed. Or, at a later time, they felt that because the Lord was in His holy Temple He was nowhere else. They must, therefore, be devoutly circumspect while engaged in His formal worship, but at other times they might live as they pleased. This was the germ out of which grew much of that inconsistency which characterized the most religious among the Jews in Old Testament times, as well as their successors the Scribes and Pharisees of Our Lord's Day. It made them men who were most punctilious in their observance of the forms of worship, yet who could

go direct from the altar and rob the widow and oppress the fatherless, and be guilty of all manner of dishonest practices.

The second way of abusing sacred things is,—regarding them as possessing some peculiar virtue or charm in themselves, by reason of which they may be relied upon for salvation by the man who makes any use of them whatever. The Jews had certain things which they fancied were so sacred in themselves, that their simple presence would be a safeguard against evil. They sometimes were so bold as to put to a practical test the virtue they believed resided in those sacred things, and the result was uniformly disastrous. One of the most pointed instances of this is to be found recorded in the fourth chapter of the First Book of Samuel. The Israelites went out against the Philistines to battle, and were smitten, with the loss of about four thousand men. “And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to-day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us that when *it* cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies. So the people sent to

Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the Lord of Hosts, which dwelleth between the Cherubims. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas were there with the ark of the covenant of God. And when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. Be strong and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you; quit yourselves like men and fight. And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent; and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas were slain." ¹ This was what came of their regarding one of their holiest things as possessed of saving virtue.

But the Jews were slow to learn that God meant them to understand that the only place there could be any holiness, which could profit them, was in

their own hearts, and in that which their sacred things represented. And failing to learn this, they went on with their religious folly which they dignified by the name of worship. They regarded sacrifices as things of great value in themselves, and believed that the offering of them would be acceptable to God, whatever might be the character of the offerer, or the disposition of heart in which they were presented; and the more of them that were offered, the better pleased God would be.

In like manner also they regarded prayers as possessed of a certain God-pleasing virtue, simply as performances, and the value of them might be measured by their number and their length. It is these vain imaginations God rebukes so severely in the first chapter of the Book of Isaiah: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord; I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and

sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with ; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth ; they are a trouble unto me ; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you ; yea when ye make many prayers I will not hear ; your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well ; seek judgement, relieve the oppressed ; judge the fatherless ; plead for the widow." ¹

God taught the Jews that forms of worship were not instituted in order to please Him, in such a way as to work some change within Him, by which He would become better disposed toward mankind ; but they were instituted to be helpful to man, both as a means by which he might express his homage to God, and as a means of cultivating in his heart right dispositions toward God, and of elevating man to a higher plane of moral and spiritual life ; and if, through man's folly and pride of heart, those forms were complacently observed, without any regard to their true end—as if it were God and not

man that needed to be changed—they became abominable in the sight of God.

The third way of abusing sacred things is, using them as stepping-stones to conduct the worshipper over to idolatry.

Man, as an immortal being, has an inherent disposition to worship, which can be satisfied only with spiritual things. And if the attempt be made to satisfy this disposition by the use of sensuous things, it will demand more and more of such things, never crying enough. Leave out the truly spiritual element of worship, and bring in a gorgeous ritual, and soon the ritual must be made still more elaborate. In proportion as spirituality is low, forms must be high. It is with religion and worship as with matters of ordinary taste. In proportion as the taste is defective, the objects which appeal to it must be loud and showy. High colours and the blare of the trumpet, for the untutored eye and ear; but for the man of refined tastes and sensibilities, nothing can be too subdued and chaste. The heart in which the spirit of true religion dwells, needs no showy forms by means of which to worship; but if the spirit of true

religion be wanting, no limit can be placed upon the use of forms;—idolatry in one form or another becomes inevitable. And the Jews were no exception to this rule. They first became so formal in the offering of their multiplied sacrifices, that they seem to have begun to wonder themselves what it all meant, or at least what use God could make of their offerings; and in seeking an answer, they drifted into the heathen notion, that sacrifices were of some material value to the Being to whom they were offered, either as food or otherwise. This idea prevailed at a very early time among the Hindoos. In the Vedas we read:—"By sacrifices the gods are nourished."¹ The Hindoo worshipper "was thoroughly persuaded that the gods were capable of receiving benefit from his sacrifices; that they were fed by the abundant products of his field or garden, were exhilarated by the juices of the holy soma-plant, were nerved by his impassioned prayers, were solaced by the music of his hymns, and that in recompense for all such acts of piety the gods became propitious to him."²

The Jews, in the formality and sensuousness of

their worship, fell into the same error, and in the fiftieth Psalm God thus rebukes their folly : "I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goat out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountain ; and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell thee ; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats ? Offer unto God thanksgiving ; and pay thy vows unto the most High." ¹

But not content with associating heathen notions with the appointments of their ritual, they threw aside their ritual, and imported into their worship the idolatry of the nations that lay round about them. "They built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Moloch." ² "They also built them high places, and images and groves on every high hill and under every green tree." ³

It was by steps such as these, that the simple, heaven-born religion and worship of primitive times,

gradually declined, until it was degraded to the level of abject heathenism.

But during all those centuries of gradual decline, many efforts had been put forth toward having primitive religion restored. This was the great end of the life of Moses ; he led the people out of Egypt and back toward their own land, where it was hoped they would live in undisputed possession of the soil, free from contaminating heathen influences, and would walk with God in spirit and in truth and worship Him everywhere, as the holiest of the earlier time had done. It was with a view to the better securing of this end, that the people were caused to pass through the long discipline of law, and of faith, to which they were subjected in the wilderness. It was with the same end in view, that Joshua was bidden go up and possess the land, driving the heathen inhabitants out from before him. In like manner, the Judges were successively raised up to deliver the people from becoming again the slaves of their heathen neighbours, as they had been in Egypt. And even when, contrary to the Divine approval, the people demanded a king to reign over them that they might be like the nations around

them, it was so ordered of God that there were among their kings some who had the true idea of religion and worship. David was found a man after God's own heart in this respect; and the people were never so near to becoming the people God wished them to be, as in David's reign. Their enemies were all subdued round about them, and their king had the same idea of the free and all-pervading nature of religion and worship, which holy men of the early time had cherished. He had been brought up as a shepherd lad in the wilderness, and while fighting off the lion and the bear, had found God's presence near. And at a later time, banished far from the tabernacle and all its sacred appointments, yet cherishing in his heart a deep love for them all, and a still deeper love for Him whose constant presence and loving favour they symbolized, he was hunted among the rocks of the wild goats, and was compelled to call upon God amid the fastnesses of nature, with only the blue canopy above him, teaching him to sing: "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest

him?"¹ "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work."² Many of the Psalms of the sweet singer of Israel are pervaded throughout with the idea which was the governing thought of the lives of the men who at an earlier time had "walked with God." It cannot be claimed that David never abused the Jewish ritual, yet his idea of religion was broader and purer than that of any other man since the days of Moses. He came short in many things, yet he was a true theocratic king. In his lofty statesmanship, coupled with his devout recognition of the hand of God in all things, he had at heart a deep sense of his own "last words," "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."³

After the days of David, and after the building of the Temple, prophets were successively raised up to endeavour to stem the tide of formalism and wickedness, and call the people back to give heed to the voice of God,—but all to no purpose. At one time the prophet reminded them of all the way by which God in His kindness and faithfulness had led them, and of His grief of heart over their wanton apos-

tacy. At another time he painted for them in the most vivid colours the ruin which would assuredly overtake them, if they refused to turn from their folly; or he appealed again to every noble impulse which might yet be awakened within them, by taking the pencil from the hand of God, and at His dictation portraying the glorious destiny that awaited them if they would forsake their own counsels, and turn from imitating the conduct of their foolish fellow-men, and be the true people of the Lord. But after all, God was compelled to cry against them: "Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them; yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck; they did worse than their fathers."¹ The people had sunk to a depth of wickedness on the one hand, and a would-be-pious formalism on the other, from which it was not in the power of man to raise them. In the midst of this gradual apostasy, and of the fruitless efforts put forth to check its downward course, God had given frequent intimations of the coming of One stronger than man. And at

length, by the mouth of His servant Malachi, in the plainest terms and for the last time, He told the few who had remained faithful amid all the degeneracy of their time, of the speedy coming of that One who would in due time fully accomplish the work of restoration which Moses and all the prophets had failed to effect—"Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in: behold he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, *as in the days of old, and as in former years.*"¹

CHAPTER VII.



JESUS THE TRUE RESTORER.



CHAPTER VII.

JESUS THE TRUE RESTORER.

WHEN the fulness of the time was come,¹ Jesus appeared on the earth to undertake the work which the law and the prophets had failed to accomplish. But the work Jesus found to be done was far greater than that which the prophets had attempted. Centuries had passed away since the prophets had uttered their last notes of warning, and in the meantime the nation had found other reformers, chief among whom were the Scribes and Pharisees; and they were in earnest in the matter of reform. It is a common mistake to suppose that the Scribes and Pharisees were all hypocrites in the sense of being insincere. Many of them were hypocrites unwittingly. The man who professes to be what he is not is a hypocrite. Many a man honestly professes to be a Christian—a fol-

lower of Christ—while a single glance at his conduct reveals the fact that he has either no proper conception of what being a follower of Christ means, or else has no conception of the wide difference there is between his conduct and his creed. He is a keen man of the world, with Christ's name named upon him; and though his heart be wholly given to covetousness, he moves along as gravely as if he were already a saint; and would be grossly offended were you to tell him he is a hypocrite. It was to this class of hypocrites most of the Scribes and Pharisees belonged. They meant well; they wished to be truly religious, and thought they were so; and they sincerely intended to reform their nation's religion. But they mistook the reform that was needed. They saw that something was wrong, but in their endeavour to set it right they led the people farther and farther into error. They imagined that the fault was, that the people were not religious enough in the outward sense; that what was needed was a more rigid attention to all the forms of worship. They accordingly taught the people to give new attention to tithes and offerings. And not content with the ritual of their fathers, they made

extensive additions to it. The old law was not sufficiently minute. In their added traditions they attended to the minutiae of religion. They defined the precise length of a Sabbath day's journey; they determined the very half-second at which the Sabbath itself must be regarded as beginning and ending; they instituted countless minute regulations and foolish customs, all looking in the one direction of compelling men to live and worship, not in accordance with an inward principle, but an external law. Under their *regime* a man's righteousness might be computed by the rules of common arithmetic, and so did not attain to the level of ordinary virtue or morality.

But those reformers found favour with the people, and were regarded as being holier than other men; and they themselves believed they were holier than other men. To say a word against such zealous men was to speak against God's most devoted servants—men who were better than the priests themselves, for they were the reformers of the priests, teaching them to attend to the washing of their hands before eating, and to the washing of pots and cups and vessels, and to many other such like cere-

monies. And the priests did their bidding; for neither the priests, nor the Scribes—even though they were the Bible-students and diligent theologians of that day—nor the Pharisees, with all their zeal, nor the people themselves, seem to have observed that the real seat of the nation's disease had never been touched, and that the whole body was becoming more and more unspiritual and corrupt. It may be thought strange that no such discovery was made. It may be supposed that for a man to give the Lord tithes of the smallest products, such as mint, anise and cummin, with one hand, and with the other to oppress the poor and rob the widow and the fatherless, were a religious absurdity which the man himself could not fail to take note of. Yet such is human nature. It cheats itself by the simple use of words. It calls paying tithes *worship*, and making a sharp bargain *business*, and rests satisfied that all is right.

The Scribes and Pharisees believed that the change they had wrought upon their nation's religion was the very change that had been needed. They accordingly went on giving the most scrupulous attention to the forms of worship, but overlooking the inconsistencies in their own lives. And though they

thus laid themselves open to the charge of being only whited sepulchres, their inability to see themselves in their true character, made it natural and easy for them to conduct themselves with that air of dignified self-assurance, which belongs to those who feel confident that they are right, and all the world besides wrong. So perfectly satisfied were they that their course was the only right course, and that their religious views were the only religious views which should be entertained, that they were utterly intolerant of any one who would venture to suggest a change or propose a new idea. They were ready to regard such an one as the enemy of their holy religion, and could believe him to be animated by no other spirit than that of the wicked one. To them had been committed the oracles of God; they had guarded those oracles most sacredly; they had handled them most carefully, counting every word, syllable and letter; and in expounding their meaning they had availed themselves of all the traditions of the fathers; and would any man dare to say that they had not found the truth!

It was this state of things Jesus came to reform. It was with men of this zealous stamp Jesus had to

to deal. It was to a nation deluded by deluded teachers Jesus had to preach. It was a people twice dead Jesus was commissioned to revive. To convince a people thus spiritually dead,—yet who thought they had already received new life—that they were more dead than ever, was labour indeed. To show the earnest reformers of that people's religion, that notwithstanding all their good intentions and their punctilious reverence for their forms of worship, they were still hypocrites of the worst kind, was a task which called for the most consummate wisdom and skill on the part of him who had courage enough to undertake it.

But Jesus brought to this task just such wisdom and skill as were needed.

What manner of man was Jesus? He is represented in Scripture as possessing two opposite features of character. He is "The Lamb of God,"¹ and "The Lion of the tribe of Judah,"²—infinitely gentle, yet infinitely bold; ready to deal most tenderly, yet ready to deal most heroically; womanlike in His sympathy, yet virile in His rugged fearlessness;—possessing in the highest degree all that can be properly included under the dual term *Gentle Man*,

The severe aspect of Christ's character is often overlooked. We are apt to think of the loving Saviour as a kind of Sleeping Beauty,—a passive self-sacrificing Redeemer, who came into the world to be caressed by those who loved Him, and abused by those who hated Him;—an indulgent man, all patience, and "sweet reasonableness," and patronizing blandishments, who came to tell mankind that they were doing very well as far as they had gone, but needed a little more of the savour of love and the balm of peace, and that He was come to give them these. In painting the portrait of Jesus from Scripture we colour it with our own wishes. We make the Bible describe Him as we would like to see Him rather than as He really is. Human nature is weak and childish. It loves to be petted and indulged. Its ideal Saviour is One who will handle it delicately and treat it to sweetmeats and dainties. In reading the gospels men pass hastily over Christ's severe utterances and dwell upon His tender words. Their Saviour is the Saviour who says, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,"¹ and not the Redeemer who says, "Think not that I am come to

send peace on the earth ; I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."¹ "I am come to send fire on the earth."² This is the language of an unsparing revolutionist ;—not one who is in favour of present peace upon any terms, but one who is willing to create the most painful disturbance in the meantime, if only the basis of real and lasting peace may be secured. Jesus was infinitely gentle, but His gentleness was not of that indulgent sentimental type so often attributed to Him. He was tender where tenderness was needed, cautious where caution was demanded ; but He was at the same time the boldest and most severe of men. For plainness of speech He had no equal. For faithful handling of the naked sword of truth, thrusting it home to the heart of error, regardless of its effect either upon men's feelings or His own reputation,—He was matchless. He laid the axe to the root of the tree. His fan was in His hand and the chaff of error must be winnowed from the pure grain of truth at whatever cost.

This is the character in which Jesus is represented from the beginning to the end of Scripture. In the very first intimation we have of His coming, He is set forth as One who is strong to save because also strong to smite. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."¹ Do the Psalmists sing of Him? Then loudest among the strains we hear the notes, "Kiss ye the Son lest he be angry and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little."² "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty, and in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee."³ Do the Prophets speak of His coming? Then above their tender utterances we hear the words, "But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth?"⁴ And in the opening of the New Testament Scriptures we hear His forerunner crying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"⁵; as if to say, "Forsake your

follies and your sins, for there is one at hand who will search you thoroughly and will not spare you." It is the opinion of some that John the Baptist and Jesus were directly opposite in disposition;—that John was a severe man, out upon all forms of iniquity, while Jesus was a mild man ready to tolerate evils which John would have rebuked. But this is a mistake. Jesus was a more searching and thorough Reformer than John. Hear John's own testimony,—“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor and gather his wheat into the garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”¹ This is the Restorer who had courage to say to the religious teachers and leaders of His day, “Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!”² “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?”³ What could be more terribly sublime than the description given us of this same Jesus in the latter part of the Book of Revelation: “And I saw heaven opened, and behold

a white horse ; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns ; and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood ; and his name is called the Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations , and he shall rule them with a rod of iron ; and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords."¹ This is he to whom was committed the great work of ridding early scriptural religion of all the formalism and wickedness with which man had wrapped it about, and of restoring it to its pristine purity and all-pervading spirituality.

But bold and fearless and intolerant of wrong though Jesus was, He did not begin by making an onslaught upon the religious leaders of His day. He was too wise to defeat his end by adopting any such

course. He began by seeking in the best and purest way to win the confidence and good-will of all. And first, He left nothing undone which it was lawful and right for Him to do, to assure the Jewish people that He was both at heart and by birth one of themselves, and most loyal to every Jewish institution. By the observance of the rite of circumcision, by giving attention in His boyhood to the teaching of the doctors of the law; by conforming to all proper Jewish customs; by identifying Himself with the people, both in their religious assemblies and their daily recreations; by mingling freely with them in their various social gatherings; He proved Himself to be most thoroughly one of them. And Jesus did all this, not as a matter of form, but with His whole heart. Christ was not a man of forms. It was His intense love for the Jews and their ancient social and religious customs, that led Him to conduct Himself as He did.

Then Jesus, in His love for the people, sought to gain the ear of all classes by adapting His mode of address to their varying circumstances; and He succeeded in this. Taking for His themes the most interesting and practical scenes and objects, as the

lily, the sower, the shepherd, the vine-dresser, the king, the householder, the judge, the traveller, the prodigal, He discoursed with such wisdom, and in strains so fascinating, as to captivate every heart. His very enemies exclaimed: "The world is gone after him,"¹ and those who were sent to silence Him returned saying: "Never man spake like this man."²

But Jesus did more than all this to prepare the hearts of the people for receiving His message. He showed the people that He was their Friend, and gave them evidence of His kindness and His heartfelt sympathy with all classes, in deeds such as had never been witnessed among them. He endeared Himself to the multitudes that thronged about Him, by feeding them with bread from His own hand. In the hours of their sorest bodily distress He was present to heal them. When grief stricken friends stood sorrowing in the chamber of death, or around the bier, or by the closed grave, there did Jesus prove Himself the "Friend in need." Whether it was the high-born or the humble that called in His aid, He was always ready to perform the kind office. The ruler's daughter and the widow's son will stand

up together at the last to bear testimony to His impartial kindness.

It is true Jesus often found it necessary to speak severely, but He never spoke unkindly. All the Lion-like strength of His character was rooted and grounded in love, so that every word he uttered in exposing falseness and bearing witness to the truth, was uttered in faithfulness, and from the midst of a life that was spent in going about doing good.

But Jesus claimed the attention of the people most powerfully by giving them abundant evidence that He was no mere man, but was in truth the Son of God. Whether He touched the fevered hand, or rebuked the midnight winds, or cried through His tears, "Lazarus, come forth,"¹ or turned and looked upon Peter, or said upon the cross, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do,"² He commended Himself to the world as the loveliest of human characters possessed of all the purity and strength of Deity. Whether we consider His loyalty as a Jew—the Son of David and the Son of Abraham—or His generous and unselfish nature as a kind and loving brother; or the wisdom which marked all His utterances; or the evidences He gave

of His intimate relation to the Father; or in whatever aspect we view Him, we can see no excuse for the opposition He met with from the religious leaders of His day. They should have seen that He was a wise Teacher, and that all His utterances were entitled to the most profound respect. And wherein He differed from them and rebuked them, they should have been ready to entertain a doubt concerning the correctness of their view of religion, and should have been willing to suspect that, after all their reverence for their forms and ceremonies, they were wrong and Jesus was right. But they were guilty of that peculiar form of self-righteousness which regards the unpardonable sin as consisting in the loss of confidence in one's own religious belief, and in the various human appointments connected therewith.

Jesus taught the religionists of His day that with all their professed zeal for the law, they were ignorant of what was meant by keeping the law; they kept the law in the outward, formal sense merely, overlooking the fact that no moral law can be properly observed as a matter of form. He taught that it is the spirit of the law that must be kept, and

kept with the spirit; for law is a spiritual thing, the letter is only its visible reflection. And He showed the Scribes and Pharisees that by paying rigid attention to religious forms, while overlooking the fact that God is appropriately worshipped only when He is worshipped with the heart, they had succeeded in making both themselves and their followers accomplished hypocrites, who imagined they were keeping every commandment in the decalogue, while they were in reality breaking every commandment. They knew that the Fourth Commandment said, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,"¹ and they accordingly measured with careful precision the duration of the day, and specified minutely just how far a man might walk on that day, and what kind of work he might perform, and they were shocked that Jesus should heal on the Sabbath day, or allow his disciples to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat, rubbing them in their hands; but Jesus taught them that no man could keep the Sabbath by merely regulating his conduct according to an outward rule; that it is with the heart and not by mechanical contrivances the day must be kept holy unto the Lord.

They knew that the Fifth Commandment said, "Honour thy father and thy mother,"¹ and the Jews —of all people—placed strong emphasis upon this command; but Jesus called their attention to certain usages among them, by which they relieved themselves of the responsibility of providing an adequate support for their aged parents, showing that however they might satisfy themselves as to the outward form, with their heart they did not keep the commandment.

They knew that the Sixth Commandment said, "Thou shalt not kill,"² and they accordingly did not commit murder; but Jesus showed them that they broke the commandment as often as any one among them was angry with his brother without cause.

They knew that from of old, feasts had been appointed to be kept at Jerusalem, and they accordingly imagined that by going up to Jerusalem at the appointed times, and performing there the appointed ceremonies, they were really worshipping God; but Jesus said, "God is a Spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."³ Jesus taught the zealous religionists of His day that a complete revolution must take place in

their ideas of religion and worship; that the things they regarded as essential were comparatively unimportant, while the very things they overlooked were the only things that were absolutely essential. In the light of Christ's teaching we see that times and places and forms may change with changing seasons and centuries, but that there is one thing connected with true worship which can never change, the spirit in which it is offered. If the heart be pervaded by the spirit of truth and of devout allegiance to God, Adam may worship in the garden without any set form, or Abel without the gate may give utterance to the spirit of his mind by presenting, in some equally becoming way, one of the firstlings of his flock as an offering to the Lord; or Abraham may worship by offering a ram upon an altar; or all the patriarchs before the days of Moses may worship without a church; or from Moses to Solomon they may worship in connexion with the Tabernacle; or from Solomon to John they may worship in connexion with the Temple; even as since the days of the apostles men may worship acceptably in the house, or by the way, or in the place set apart for "the public worship of God."

That which stands out most prominently in the teaching of Jesus, is, that while the whole attention of the people had been turned to the importance of keeping laws and observing rules, Jesus brought the whole weight of His teaching to bear upon the importance of having the heart right, and living under the control of indwelling principles. Humility, penitence, meekness, purity, peaceableness, a forgiving temper, aspiration heavenward, love to God and man, these must be the spring and source of all outward acts. Men must learn to be so perfectly in sympathy with truth and righteousness, that they will need no external rule to keep them in the path of duty. They must become so much superior to forms and outward regulations, that where the human regulation would ask them to go only a mile, they are already prepared to go twain. The heart must be so in accord with all that is right, as to be always ready to make twice as great a sacrifice in the interests of peace and truth, as any human standard would ever think of demanding. Truth in its fulness, truth in its perfection, truth in the inward part, and not the mere representation of truth without, was constantly set forth as

the ideal to which fallen mankind must seek to return.

Jesus found it necessary to warn men against being misled by forms and appearances of every kind. The distinction between Jew and Gentile in matters of religion must be blotted out. It was by their real character and their fruits, and not by their names or lineage, men were to be judged. To those who thought they were entitled to special consideration owing to their being of Jewish stock, Jesus said: "Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father, for verily I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees, therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire." ¹

This was an important part of Christ's restoring work. He aimed at having mankind made one family again, as they had been at the beginning. To this end He showed Himself the Brother of all. When He met the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, He preached the Gospel to her. When a woman of Syro-Phenicia came pleading with Him on behalf

of her daughter, He granted her request as truly as if she had belonged to His own nation. When a Roman Centurion came asking Him to heal his servant, Jesus most gladly complied with his request. And when certain Greeks approached one of His disciples, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus," Jesus exclaimed, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." ¹

But the religious teachers of Christ's day—"blind leaders of the blind" ²—could not see that He was presenting the truth. Their minds were darkened by their forms and observances being hung between them and the light. They looked upon Jesus as a fanatical rival who took delight in saying things that exasperated them; and this ignoring of the distinction between Jew and Gentile was most exasperating of all. It was even blasphemous in their eyes. It was to disregard the whole teaching of their sacred Scriptures. It was to allow things, which were evermore to be kept holy unto the Lord, and to the use of His chosen people, to be profaned by the heathen. They could not grasp the doctrine, soon afterwards preached by one of Christ's disciples, that "God is no respecter of persons: but in every

nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him,"¹ a doctrine which one of their own most learned men, a little later was gladly constrained to emphasize in the words:—
"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him ; where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free ; but Christ is all and in all."²

But while Jesus taught that the distinction between Jew and Gentile should be ignored in matters of religion, He did not aim at overthrowing the Jewish nation, or even the ancient religion of the Jews. The nation had already lost its independence, and was tributary to the Roman Empire. But had it still been independent, Jesus would have been far from wishing its downfall. And as for the idea of His making war upon the Jewish religion—as well might it be said that Martin Luther came to make war against the Christian religion. No man could love the religion of Jesus Christ more sincerely than Luther did. It was his love for this religion and his zeal for its honour that led him to engage so eagerly in the work of making havoc of those false

institutions, which—built up around it and called by its name—professed to be part and parcel of its life. No man could love the Jewish religion and the Jewish nation so ardently as Jesus did. It was His love for His brethren of mankind at large, and his immediate love for His brethren the Jews, and for all that was Divine in their ancient religion, that made Him the unsparing Reformer He was. For it must never be forgotten that Jesus as a man, was not only a Jew, but was one who could trace His lineage back to the very founder of the nation; and He always spoke of His ancestors and their religion in terms of the truest respect and affection. It is true He made havoc of many things which had the name of the religion of Moses and the Prophets stamped upon them, and in doing this He was misunderstood and regarded as seeking to destroy that religion itself. He found it necessary to endeavour to assure the people to the contrary: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."¹ Or, when He healed a leper, He said to him, "Go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded,"²

There were some who declared that He ridiculed the Temple, but they were false witnesses. No Jew ever loved Jerusalem and the Temple as Jesus did. It was no mere affectation of zeal that led Him to drive from the Temple with a scourge of small cords those who polluted its sacred courts. It was genuine love such as could swell no other heart. Did the Jews in the time of their captivity hang their harps upon the willows and weep when they remembered Zion—each one plaintively singing: “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy?”¹ Even more tenderly did Jesus exclaim, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not.”² “And when he was come near he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies

shall cast a trench about thee and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side. And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."¹

Yet much as Jesus loved the Jewish nation, He did not advocate throwing off the Roman yoke, or refusing allegiance to the Romans in any way. He Himself paid tribute to the Roman government. Jesus was not a political revolutionist, and for the best of reasons; He came to bear witness not to forms, but to the truth. The spirit of His whole teaching was,—the letter, the form, the outward appearance, is only secondary; the heart, the spirit, the essence, the soul, that which will endure eternally, is the thing of infinite importance. Let all the citizens be right at heart, and in all the essentials of true character, and the country may be an independent commonwealth, or limited monarchy may be the form of government, or the people may be ruled over by an autocrat; and their ecclesiastical arrangements may shape themselves accordingly;—for we judge the spirit of Christ's teaching in this respect to be, that if men's hearts be right toward

God, the order in which they may be grouped together for religious purposes, may vary with varying circumstances.

It is sometimes hazardous, even in our enlightened age, for a man to advocate the broad principles of religious life laid down by Jesus. He is in danger of being put out of the synagogue. Is it any wonder that Jesus was put to death? Men who have been in advance of their age have always been misunderstood, and have suffered in consequence. Jesus was as far in advance of His day as God is in advance of man. It was not altogether unnatural therefore that the zealous but blinded religionists whom He sought to enlighten, should have called Him a blasphemer; and when they could account for His wondrous power in no other way, should have said that He was possessed of the Devil. It must have been surprising to them, however, that,—wicked, sacrilegious man as they took Him to be—they could never entangle Him in His teaching, and Him guilty of any breach of even the most sacred law. But failing in this, they fell back upon the general impression they had of Him, and said that, in any case, He must be put out of the way. And accordingly by means of

bribery, and false witnesses, and a mock trial, they "by wicked hands" condemned Him to death, flattering themselves all the while, that the end they had in view—ridding the country of a dangerous man—would fully justify any irregularity in the means by which that end might be attained.

But Jesus swerved not from His purpose. He came to bear witness unto the truth, and He sealed His testimony with His blood, conscious however, that the little leaven of saving truth He had brought to the world, would yet leaven the whole lump;—that the corn of wheat which seemed to drop into the earth only to die, would yet bring forth much fruit, which would wave in glory on the mountain tops; and He would see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

The great work, then, which Jesus came to do, so far as the historic and earthward side of His mission was concerned, was—First, to divest men's minds of the idea that religious forms and observances could be of any value, apart from the spirit of true worship, which those forms and observances had been originally instituted to express, where that spirit already existed, to cherish where it was in danger of

languishing, and to restore where it had already been lost. It was further Christ's mission to show, that if religious rites and ceremonies failed to accomplish these ends, they must no longer be relied upon. It was still further His mission to declare, that owing to the inherent depravity of the human heart, and the native estrangement of the human soul from God, even divinely appointed observances had not succeeded in restoring to the world that religion of pure and all-pervading spirituality which had been introduced to the earth at the first; yet that true religion must not be allowed to die out of the world; man must be saved at whatever cost; something better than sacrifices and offerings must do the work which, through man's misuse of these, they had failed to do. In one word, it was the mission of Jesus to do for the Jewish nation what all the appointments of their ritual had failed to do; and to do for the whole world what they as a nation had proved themselves utterly incompetent to do. That nation had been chosen and specially favoured of heaven, for the very purpose of imparting to the world a knowledge of heaven-born religion in its purity, and seeing that it had failed to do this, not-

withstanding its law and all its divinely appointed enactments, it became necessary for God's true Israel, Servant, Elect—the true Seed of Abraham—to place Himself in the breach, and be the One in whom all families of the earth should be blessed. “For I beheld and there was no man; even among them, and there was no counsellor, that, when I asked of them could answer a word. Behold, they are all vanity; their works are nothing; their molten images are wind and confusion. Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth. I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. . . . He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law.”¹

And so far as agencies for accomplishing the work of restoring true religion, were concerned, it behoved Jesus to say,—Inasmuch as sacrifices and offerings, and all other appointments, have failed, and would evermore fail, I must undertake this part of the work also, and by my doctrine, example, life, *death*, must restore true religion to the world. “Wherefore when he cometh into the world he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou

prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo! I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.”¹ The whole religious history of the most favoured people under heaven, had shown most conclusively that, by reason of the curse of sin, the constant tendency of mankind was to depart farther and farther from God, and that, without the direct interposition of Divine Power, mankind must be utterly lost. Therefore, “What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.”²

Such is, in part at least, and in outline, the restoring work of Jesus as we view it, mainly from the historic and earthward side. But we know that it has also a heavenward side. If there was a human necessity for Christ’s advent to this world, there was also a divine necessity; while His death can be shown to have been the result of the most natural combination of earthly causes, it is none the less true that He was “Christ our passover. . . . sacrificed

for us.”¹ “The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”² We catch glimpses of both the earthward and the heavenward side of Christ’s mission in such passages as the following:—“Therefore, by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”³

And now what security have we that this restoring work which Jesus undertook, will go on to its completion? We have seen that in all past times mankind have gone backward and not forward, after

each successive effort at restoration. It was gradual degeneracy that necessitated the choosing of Noah and his family out of the wicked world. And after the restoration effected by the deluge, it was gradual degeneracy that necessitated the calling of Abraham. It was a third downward movement that led to the call of Moses to the great work assigned him. And soon after the days of Moses the decline set in once more, and with such precipitancy that it was beyond man's power to effect the slightest restoration. And it must be manifest to all, that the past eighteen Christian centuries have not been without their symptoms of spiritual declension. What assurance have we that the work of restoration which Jesus undertook, will not result in a still more fearful apostasy from God? Just this as sufficient ;—Jesus has secured to us for ever, not the divine favour alone, but the gift of the Holy Ghost. The great weakness of all past times was, that a merely human spirit was dominant in the world. The great lack was the lack of the presence of the Spirit of God in the hearts of men. But all the prophets—to whom the Spirit was given—declared that with the advent of the Messiah there would come the outpouring of

the Spirit. And before His departure Jesus promised to send the Spirit, and promised also that when He, the Spirit of truth, was come, He would guide men into all truth.¹ We already see this promise moving forward in its gradual fulfilment. We hope, in the strength of God's word, to see it still more and more fulfilled as the years roll by, until eventually the Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh, and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord; and men will walk with God and worship Him everywhere, not in pristine innocency indeed, but in what shall be infinitely better, the assured confidence of being the ransomed of the Lord, eternally restored to the divine favour, in terms of the covenant which the Lord Almighty hath made with His Chosen.

The religion Jesus came to restore was the true, personal, practical religion introduced into the world at the first; the worship He came to re-establish was that all-pervading, spiritual worship, which had been the spontaneous utterance of the soul of sinless man in Paradise.

To this Jesus bore testimony by every act and utterance of His life. When asked what particular

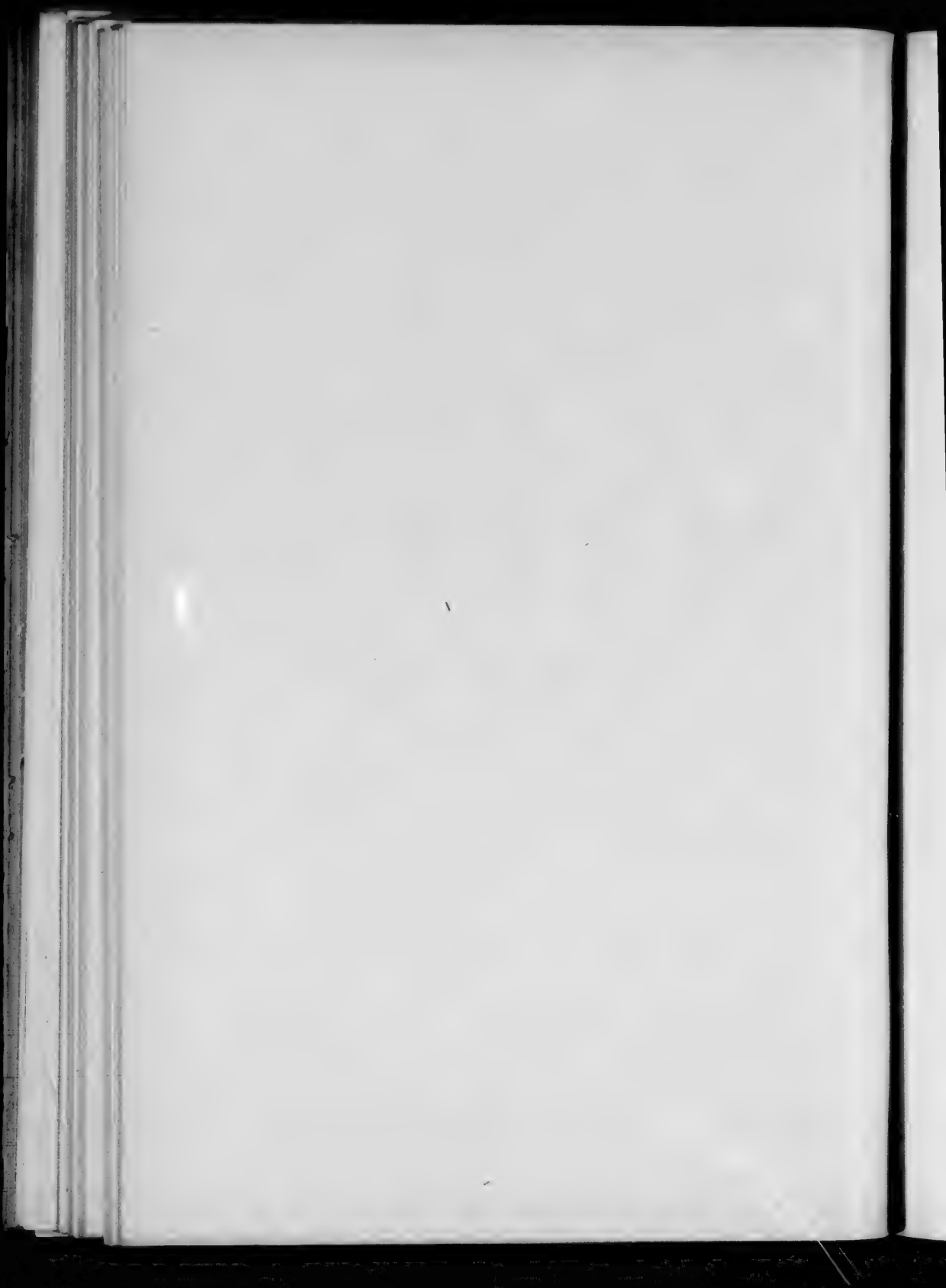
place was the proper place for worship, His reply was: "Believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." ¹ He drove the traders from the Temple and taught that His Father's house should be known among all nations as an house of prayer; but He taught at the same time, that God's presence and service could not be confined to temples made with hands; that alike in the temple and on the tossing vessel, in the synagogue and on the street, in the house of sorrow and the house of mirth, in the workshop and in the field, God must be honoured and worshipped with the heart. In exemplification of these truths Jesus "went about doing good," and invited all classes to come to Him, and to come at all times and in all manner of places. In the various features of Christ's ministry, and in His character in general, we see the perfect realization of all that was best and holiest in the lives of those who aspired God-ward from the earliest times. By choosing the mountain side

for His pulpit, and preaching beneath the open sky, He points us back to the days of Moses. By continuing all night in prayer to God on the lonely mountain-top, He proves Himself the true Son of David and of Jacob and of Abraham. By the agony in the garden, and the death upon the cross, He infinitely more than reproduces to us the days of Abel. By His rising from the dead, His subsequent sojourn on the earth, and His final ascension to glory, He commends to our imitation Enoch's holy walk with God; and by His whole life, death, and finished work, devoted to the removal of the curse, and the restoring of mankind to the favour and friendship of God, He carries us back to the days of man's sinlessness in Eden. *Jesus is the true Restorer.*



CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTIANITY UNFORTUNATE IN ITS
FRIENDS.





CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTIANITY UNFORTUNATE IN ITS FRIENDS.

WHEN Jesus brought back true religion to the world, the world was full of religions, and of religious pride and zeal. Greece had long had, together with her great learning and profound philosophy, a system of religion to which she was devotedly attached. Rome had succeeded to the empire of the world, with a religious system to which she was also strongly wedded. In Palestine, the Jews were clinging to their caricature of their ancient religion, with a love strong as death. These religions were great in the eyes of those who embraced them, chiefly because of the historic interest that gathered about them, and the imposing ceremonies by which their acts of public worship were observed. They were buttressed by magnificent

temples and the most gorgeous ritualism, not to speak of the fact that they were all believed to be divine in their origin.

While the devotees of those systems were intoxicated with religious pride, they revelled in the love of sin; and it behoved the truth as it was in Jesus to undertake the work of restoring this deranged world to its right mind. But the foolish world, instead of accepting the treatment of the Physician, and submitting itself to Him as its Restorer, took Him and His remedies under its charge, as if He had been in need of care, and His remedies had themselves required re-adjusting; and—as the result—the truth to which Jesus bore witness, has been so diluted and otherwise abused, that it has become necessary for men to spend years of study, in order to discover what that truth was in its original purity. To such a degree has the character of Jesus been misrepresented, by those who for several centuries took the records of His life in charge, that earnest scholars in our day, find it necessary to devote their whole energies to the endeavour to reproduce to men a faithful description of the life of our Lord, in the form

in which it stood forth before the work of misrepresentation began. And through the misguided zeal of those who should have been the true friends of Christ, and the wise custodians of His truth, the life and doctrines of Jesus, which were originally as clear as the sunlight, have become so bedimmed that the Christian world finds itself divided up amongst jarring sectaries, who are utterly unable to agree upon what the Gospel is, or upon the nature and meaning of the person and work of its Great Author.

Christ's kingdom, though for this world, was not of this world. It was neither an external organization, nor a philosophical system. It was the kingdom of the truth—truth in the heart, and consequent uprightness and purity in the life. Instead of being antagonistic to man's proper use of the present world, it was specially designed to enable man to cause all God's works to praise Him. But the people who first embraced Christ's religion, turned it aside from its true purpose in every one of these respects. They changed it into an external organization, similar to that the falseness of which it had come to expose. They made use of its doctrines as

a cloak to cover them in the habitual practice of sin. By weaving those doctrines and their own false philosophies together, they converted the Gospel into a system of metaphysics, which professed to be able to apply the principles of ordinary mental philosophy, to all the phenomena of Deity. And they set up this caricature of the religion of Jesus Christ, in opposition to the advance of secular progress.

To indicate the fuller illustration of these statements, we need only glance at the history of a few of the past Christian centuries.

But first, it should be observed that the religion taught by the Apostles, and other immediate followers of Christ, was the simple, practical religion of Jesus. Every reader of the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles which follow, must have noted the intensely practical character of those parts of the Inspired Word, and the little account they take of attention to religious forms. They illustrate the Saviour's words—"My yoke is easy and my burden is light."¹ With the exception of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, they inculcate the observance of no religious ceremonies as being at all

important. Even the forms of government and discipline, to be observed in the organizing of Christian communities and religious assemblies, are placed before us, not so much by definite precept, as by the example which the Apostles found it expedient and wise to set, in the organizing of churches in their day. Where definite precepts are given, they are mostly of a general kind:—"Let all things be done unto edifying;"¹ "Let all things be done decently and in order."² As to the preaching of the Apostles, whether orally or by letter, it was marked by two prominent characteristics, direct practicalness and perfect adaptation to the circumstances of those addressed. There was no set form in which the truth could be always preached. The teaching of the New Testament preachers was as varied as were the wants of their hearers—only that, first or last, the accepting of Christ and His religion, was set forth as the one thing needful. If Peter preached in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, to a multitude gathered from all countries, yet more or less acquainted with the facts concerning Christ's life, death, and resurrection, he presented the truth that Jesus had come to fulfil the Old Testament prophe-

cies, and be the Saviour of the world,—adding the pointed exhortation, which was not without its reference to the Scribes and Pharisees, who were probably standing by :—“ Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”¹ If Paul preached to Jews at Antioch, or Iconium, or elsewhere, he invariably reasoned with them out of the Old Testament Scriptures, which they professed to believe. But if he preached to the heathen at Lystra, or Athens, or elsewhere, he as uniformly reasoned with them out of the great book of nature, which was the only sacred book they and he had in common. So, also, if Paul wrote to people living at Rome or Ephesus, where philosophising tendencies were to be met and satisfied, he presented the doctrine of the purpose of God in sending His Son Jesus Christ into the world, as not only the loftiest of all themes, but as far transcending all man’s

powers of understanding. But if he wrote to the Churches at Corinth or Thessalonica, where there was less of philosophical speculation, but an abounding of wrong-doing and wickedness, then he brought all the weight of the truth as it was in Jesus to bear upon practical life. And even in those Epistles in which the more philosophical aspects of Christ's mission are discussed, the philosophy of the Gospel is introduced for the purpose of preparing the way for presenting the practical truths, which Jesus Himself so constantly inculcated.

The religion of those early teachers themselves was of the free and all-pervading type. It was the religion of the tent maker and the traveller. It was the religion of the first day of the week and of the seventh. Its Gospel could be preached in a Jewish synagogue at Thessalonica, or in Herod's temple at Jerusalem, or in the midst of heathen Mars' Hill at Athens. Its representatives were never at a loss for a place of worship. They could go out of the city by a river-side, where prayer was wont to be made, and sit down and speak to the women that resorted thither ;¹ or they could kneel down on the shore and pray ; or, at midnight in prison, with their feet fast

in the stocks, they could pray and sing praises to God, so that the prisoners heard them. ¹

For two or three centuries after the death of the last of the Apostles, the religion of many who had received the gospel at their hands, was of the same broad, pure, practical type; and amid the fiercest persecution, and untold hardships, they adhered firmly to the principles of truth which had been laid down both by the Apostles and by the Master Himself. But in the fourth century the people of the great Roman Empire took Christianity under their care, and embraced it as their religion. Instead, however, of accepting the religion of Jesus in its simplicity, and making its broad and pure principles the basis of the nation's life, they brought about an amalgamation of certain outward features of Christianity, with their own Pagan rites and superstitions, so that the simple Christian religion of the previous centuries, was gradually "transmuted into one more fashionable and debased." "It was incorporated with the old Greek mythology. Olympus was restored, but the divinities passed under other names. The more powerful provinces insisted on the adoption of their time-honoured conceptions. Views

of the Trinity, in accordance with Egyptian traditions, were established. Not only was the adoration of Isis under a new name restored, but even her image, standing on the crescent moon, re-appeared. The well known effigy of that goddess with the infant Horus in her arms, has descended to our days in the beautiful artistic creations of the Madonna and Child." ¹ Thus "heathen rites were adopted; a pompous and splendid ritual, gorgeous robes, mitres, tiaras, wax-tapers, processional services, lustrations, gold and silver vases, were introduced. The Roman lituus, the chief ensign of the Augurs, became the crozier. Churches were built on the tombs of martyrs, and consecrated with rites borrowed from the laws of the Roman pontiffs. Festivals and commemorations of martyrs multiplied with the numberless fictitious discoveries of their remains. Fasting became the grand means of repelling the Devil and appeasing God; celibacy the greatest of the virtues. Pilgrimages were made to Palestine and the tombs of the martyrs. Quantities of dust and earth were brought from the Holy Land and sold at enormous prices, as antidotes against devils. The virtues of consecrated water were upheld. Images and relics

were introduced into the churches, and worshipped after the fashion of the heathen gods. It was given out that prodigies and miracles were to be seen in certain places, as in heathen times. The happy souls of departed Christians were invoked; it was believed that they were wandering about the world, or haunting their graves. There was a multiplication of temples, altars and penitential garments. The festival of the purification of the Virgin was invented to remove the uneasiness of heathen converts on account of the loss of their Lupercalia, or feasts of Pan.

The worship of images, of fragments of the cross, or bones, nails and other relics, a true fetich worship, was cultivated. Two arguments were relied on for the authenticity of these objects—the authority of the Church and the working of miracles. Even the worn-out clothing of the saints, and the earth of their graves, were venerated. From Palestine were brought what were affirmed to be the skeletons of St. Mark and St. James, and other ancient worthies. The apotheosis of the old Roman times was replaced by canonization; tutelary saints succeeded to local mythological divinities. Then came the mystery of transubstantiation,

or the conversion of bread and wine by the priest into the flesh and blood of Christ. As centuries passed, the Paganization became more and more complete. Festivals sacred to the memory of the lance with which the Saviour's side was pierced, the nails that fastened Him to the cross, and the crown of thorns, were instituted. Though there were several abbeys that possessed this last peerless relic, no one dared to say that it was impossible they could all be authentic." ¹

While the people of the Roman Empire thus blended the semblance of Christianity with their Paganism, they remained the same workers of iniquity as before, and even found something in Christianity to encourage them in a life of sin. One favourite dogma which, by a process of dexterous philosophizing, they made the Christian religion teach, was—in the words of Cajetan to Luther:—"Thou must believe that one single drop of Christ's blood is sufficient to redeem the whole human race, and the remaining quantity which was shed in the garden and on the cross, was left as a legacy to the pope, from which indulgences were to be drawn." In this way, Christianity was made use of by its

avowed friends, as a cloak beneath which the most abominable iniquities were perpetrated. The heart sickens at the thought of the vices that were revealed in under the system of papal indulgences, and the crimes that were committed in the name of our religion, through its being changed into a great external organization, bolstered by the most subtle forms of false human philosophy. One who has any proper conception of the true nature of Christ's work, as represented by Himself and His apostles, needs no sadder reading, than the history of what is termed the *theology* of the middle ages,—a history largely of speculations, discussions, disputes, and even bloodshed, over secret things which belong unto the Lord our God, while the things which were clearly revealed for the salvation of the people of that age, and for their children, were either entirely ignored or rudely trampled under foot.

But the unfortunate feature of Christianity, that is attracting chief attention at the present day, is, that in some cases, it appears to be the enemy of science, opposed to the advance of secular progress, and therefore, an unfit religion for man as placed in this world to use it and develop its resources,

'There are critics who are not slow to call attention to this state of things,—and for this we should be duly thankful. "The wise and truly religious thing to do is not to get angry at such criticisms, and give them bad names, but to be candid, and listen to those who tell us of our short-comings,—try to see what justice there may be in them, and to turn whatever truth they may contain to good account." ¹

It has been pointed out by Dr. Draper,² that though it is common to hear men glorying in the wondrous secular achievements of the present age, as an evidence of what Christianity has done for the world, in point of fact, it is not to Christianity that the world is indebted for all this progress;—that the true origin of modern science is not to be found in Christian times, but in the establishment of the mathematical and practical schools of Alexandria by the Ptolemies, before the dawn of the Christian era. And not only did the sciences, which form so essential an element of our present civilization, originate then, but exact learning also had made very considerable advances before the birth of Christ. Some of the most intricate problems in Astronomy had been solved. Eclipses had been

calculated extending over a period of hundreds of years. The length of a tropical year had been fixed within twenty-five seconds of the truth. Euclid had given to the world his great work which has challenged contradiction from the whole human race ever since. Archimedes had also given to the world a work on mathematics which remained for more than two thousand years unsurpassed. The Alexandrian museum had been founded,—for the purpose, 1st, of perpetuating such knowledge as was then in existence, 2nd, for its increase, and 3rd, for its diffusion. In the library of that museum there were gathered 400,000 volumes, or, with the 300,000 in the Serapion, in all seven hundred thousand. In that museum Ctesibius invented the first fire-engine. There also the first steam-engine was invented, by Hero the mathematician, nearly two thousand years before James Watt was born.

The introduction of the world's form of Christianity placed a check upon all this progress. When the Roman empire embraced Christianity and formed itself into a great hierarchy, claiming the Gospel of Christ as its underlying principle, and the teaching of Jesus, and the writings and sayings of

Prophets, Apostles and Fathers, as its standards of truth, it made the fatal mistake of supposing that infallibility resided, not in the truth itself, but in the organization which had the truth in its keeping. It made the additional mistake of imagining that its standards of truth contained all that men should know upon any subject whatsoever. It committed the further fatal error of framing an interpretation of its standards, which all were bound to accept as the only correct interpretation—from which there should be neither dissent nor appeal.

Thus those zealous custodians of the Christian faith, instead of encouraging advancement in knowledge, interdicted the spread of intelligence, deprived men of liberty of speech, of liberty of thought, and even of liberty of conscience. If a man was suspected of holding opinions differing from those of the Church, he was subjected to the tortures of the Inquisition, and made to confess. Had that Church had its way, this American continent might never have been discovered. It was one of its favourite dogmas that, according to the teaching of Scripture and of the Fathers, this earth is a plain superficies with heaven above and hell beneath, and sun, moon

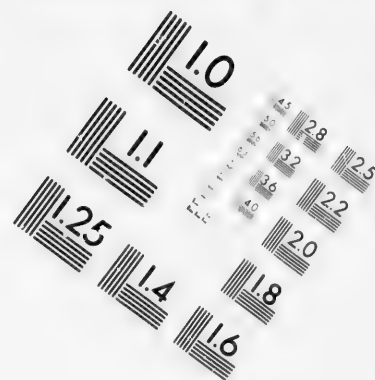
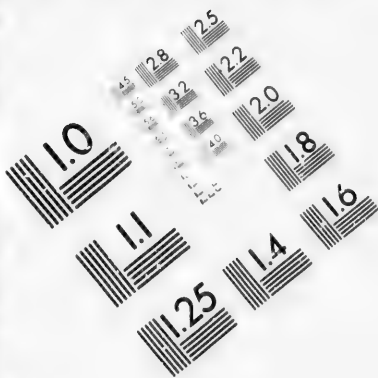
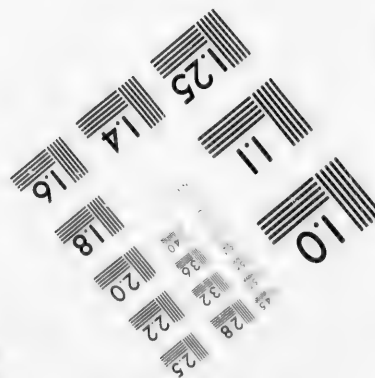
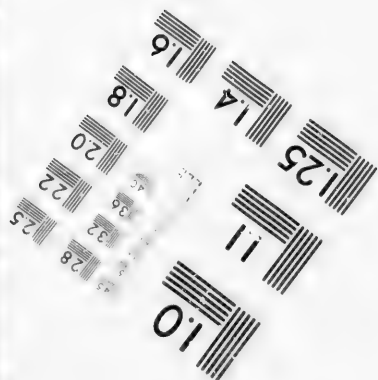
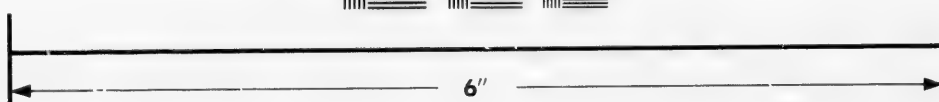
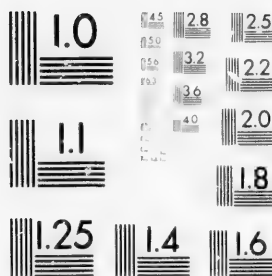


IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)



Photographic
Sciences
Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

18 20 22 25 28 32 36 40

10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17

and stars circling all around ; and it resisted unto the death every thing that threatened to disprove this dogma. Accordingly, when Columbus embraced the theory that the earth is round, and proposed attempting to reach Asia by sailing westwards from Spain, the irreligious tendency of his proposal was pointed out by the Spanish ecclesiastics, and condemned by the council of Salamanca ; and it was in the face of such opposition as this, that Columbus finally succeeded in discovering America, and finding a home for the enjoyment of a degree of religious liberty, such as had not been enjoyed in the Old World.

So also in the early part of the sixteenth century, when Copernicus completed his work "On the revolutions of the heavenly bodies," the Inquisition condemned his book as heretical, and the Congregation of the Index denounced his system as "that false Pythagorean doctrine utterly contrary to Holy Scripture." Every reader is familiar with the persecution suffered by Galileo at the hands of misguided representatives of Christianity, after the publication of his work entitled, "The System of the World," in support of the Copernican doctrine. If it were

not so pitiable it would be amusing to read, that when Halley's comet appeared in 1456, so terrible was its apparition that it was necessary for the Pope himself to interfere. To use the language of Draper, "he exorcised and expelled it from the skies. It slunk away into the abysses of space, terror-stricken by the maledictions of Calixtus III., and did not venture back for seventy-five years." We read also of the Faculty of Theology in Paris exclaiming, "What will become of religion if the study of Greek and Hebrew be permitted?"

Yet in the face of all this, and much more, the Pope in our own times has had the boldness to say, in the hearing of the world:—"Let the German people understand that no other Church but that of Rome, is the church of freedom and progress." And among the canons of the late "Ecumenical Council" we find the following:—"Let him be anathema, who shall say that it may at any time come to pass, in the progress of science, that the doctrines set forth by the Church must be taken in another sense than that in which the Church has ever received, and yet receives them." Truly, if the Jews of old were

blind, certain religionists of the present day are unable to see.

It is an indisputable fact that the Church which was for over ten centuries the main custodian and exponent of the Christian religion, has always been the opponent of secular progress. How is it with Protestantism? No one who is not blinded by prejudice, can fail to rejoice over the efforts made by Luther, Calvin, Knox and their fellow-Reformers, toward having the religion of Jesus Christ restored to its original simplicity and purity. But while we abate nothing from the glory of the great religious Reformation, which gave birth to Protestantism, and put the word of God in the hands of the people, and bade them read it for themselves, and have full liberty of conscience to live in accordance with its teaching,—we cannot forget that the Protestant Church has not yet attained, neither is already perfect. It has many of the things that are behind still to forget, and has the great prize of the high calling of God yet before it. The Protestant Church is the founder of the Common School, and the friend of learning, yet it has all along been more or less jealous of certain branches of knowledge, and

especially of man's disposition to pry into the secrets of nature. Those reviewers who live on the border-land of religions, between us and our outside neighbours, do not fail to remind us from time to time, that when the Royal Society of London was founded, it was attacked by the clergy as a dangerous institution; that when the discovery of inoculation was brought to England from Constantinople, in the early part of the eighteenth century, it was so strongly opposed by the clergy, that only its adoption by the Royal family brought it into general use; that a like opposition was offered when Jenner introduced his great improvement, vaccination; that fire and life insurance, and certain other features of our civilization, were long resisted also. We cordially recognise the fact that the Protestant Church has kept a watchful eye upon the researches of inventors, students of science, and secular scholars in general. But this is to be accounted for by the fact that secular students are in some instances the avowed enemies of the religion of Christ; by the fact also that they make many mistakes in their researches, and are in danger of prejudicing men against the truth of God, by representing His works

as being at variance with His word. It is to be accounted for in part also, by the fact that the Protestant Church has not yet gotten wholly rid of the prejudices in which she was schooled, before she abandoned the home beneath whose roof she spent so many centuries. Would that this watchfulness over the researches of students of science, were the greatest sin of which the Protestant Church is guilty, and the chief fault to be found with the Christianity of our day !

Let men tell us that the Christian religion is in any sense standing in the way of the proper development and use of this world, and we must ask what they mean by the Christian religion ; for unfortunately the religion of Jesus Christ is one thing, and what is called the Christian religion, is in many cases a very different thing. Christ's religion has suffered much at the hands of its friends. No man has ever had as bitter experience as Jesus has had, of the meaning of the words,—“ A man's foes shall be they of his own household.” ¹ His gospel has been so often embraced by men adopting its letter but not its spirit,—its fair name has been so often written on the outside while within there was nothing but supersti-

tion and impurity,—that the Church itself has almost forgotten what the religion of Jesus is. Let men tell us there has always been a conflict between *the religion of Christ* and true science, and our reply must be, that there has been no such conflict in the past and can be none in the future. The thing is impossible. The religion of Christ is the religion of Him who made the earth, and who in placing man upon it said,—“Replenish the earth and subdue it and have dominion.”¹ It is the religion of Him whose word is, “Son go work to-day in my vineyard;”² “Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might;”³ “Go to the ant thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise;”⁴ “Consider the lilies of the field;”⁵ “Consider the fowls of the air.”⁶

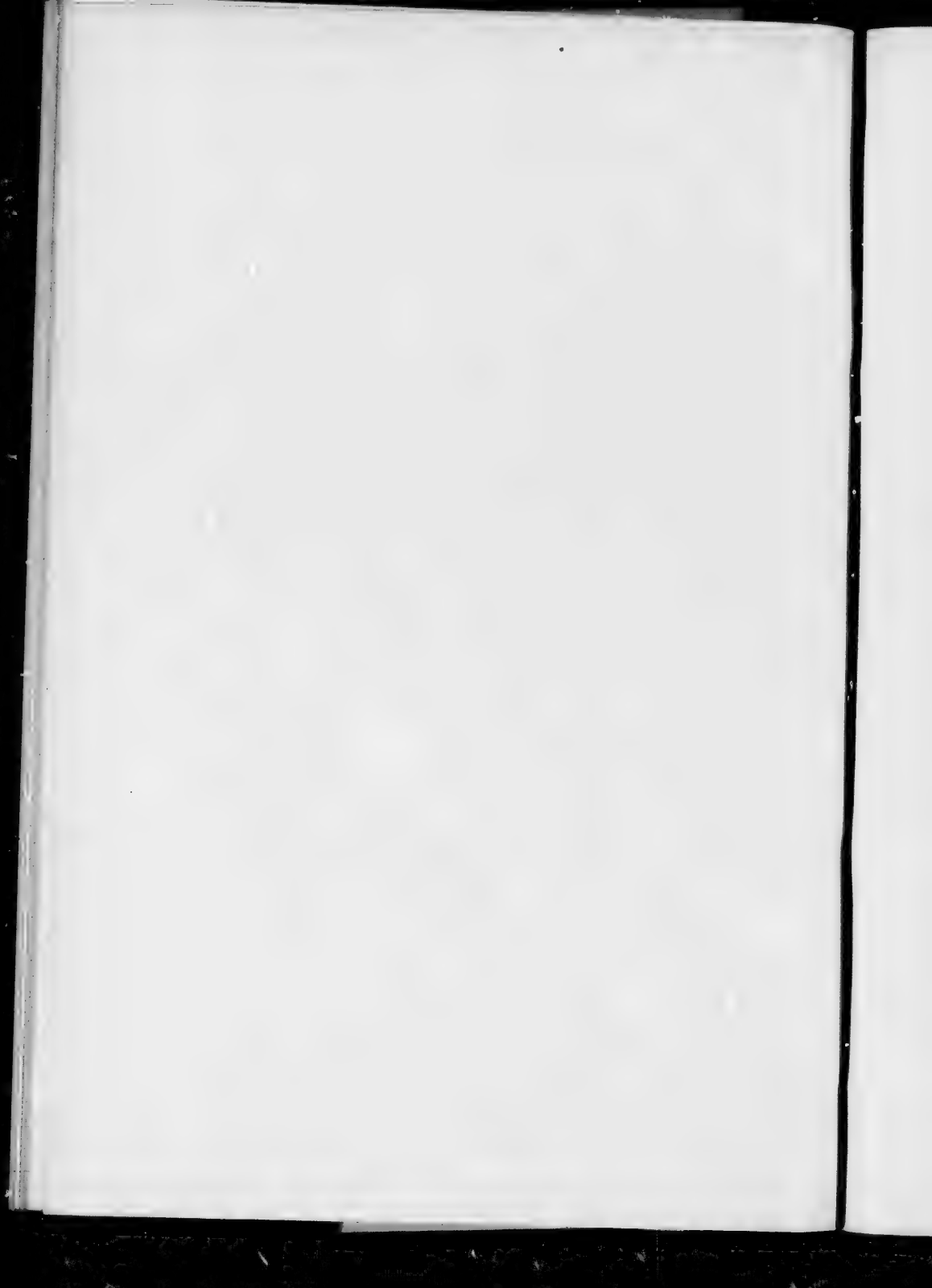
It is the religion of Him whose advent to this world was signalized by the coming of *wise men* from the east to Jerusalem, and was intimately associated with the world's best researches in the sublimest of the natural sciences. It is the religion of Him who came to lift the curse from the whole earth, so that now the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain, waiting for the adoption. Scrip-

ture reveals to us that through Christ, every gift which God has stored up in nature, is calling upon man to draw it forth that it may speak out to the Creator's praise, and blend its testimony with that of Him who is God's greatest gift, the First-born of every creature.

It is impossible to review carefully the life of Jesus of Nazareth, as set forth in Scripture, without finding evidence of the fact, that He was the most progressive Teacher the world has ever known. Not only did He never, either by word or act, discover the slightest disposition to oppose the advance of secular knowledge, but on the contrary, both by direct precept and by drawing so many of His parables and illustrations from the arts of daily life, and from the recondite processes of nature, He encouraged men to pursue the search after truth in all manner of fields. And He did all this at the time when He knew, and taught, that secular progress in itself is only an outward covering, the mere husk and shell of life; and that if a man gain it without possessing himself of the kernel of truth that lies within, it will profit him nothing. If, therefore, those who embrace the Gospel, stand in the way of secular progress, or if the

friends of secular progress stand in the way of the Gospel, they do Jesus wrong, and themselves wrong, and the world wrong, by opposing both the letter and the spirit of the teaching of the world's best Friend. That there are still some who do this, cannot be denied ; yet there are many in whose hearts better counsels prevail—who see the present antagonism, and know that all is not right as yet on either side, but who take for their motto the sentiment “ Believe in God, and bid all knowledge speed. Sooner or later the full harmony will reveal itself, the discords and contradictions disappear.” ¹





CHAPTER IX.

IS THE BIBLE ADAPTED TO ALL TIMES?



CHAPTER IX.

IS THE BIBLE ADAPTED TO ALL TIMES ?

AMONG the thousands of books which have been published within the past century alone, few, if any, are quite abreast of the progress of the age. At the present time a new work is needed to embody the results of the latest research. And among books which have been published recently, we make choice of the latest editions ; earlier editions are already out of date. Have our sacred Scriptures grown similarly old ? Do we need, not a revised translation merely, but a new and enlarged edition ? Or, as the historian Froude suggests, “ Does humanity require a new revelation ? ”

The Bible consists of three separate volumes, The first volume is the book of Genesis, the second is all that part of the Old Testament extending from the

beginning of Exodus to the end of Malachi, and the third is the New Testament. The first volume contains the history of over twenty-three hundred years, the second contains the history of less than half that time, and the third contains the history of less than a century. The history contained in the first volume is separated from that contained in the second by a gap of about a hundred years, the history contained in the second is separated from that contained in the third by a gap of over four hundred years, and from the close of the third volume down to the present time is nearly eighteen hundred years. The first volume covers the period extending from the creation to the death of Joseph, the second comprises the history which begins with Moses and ends with Malachi, and the third covers the period extending from about the birth of Christ to the death of the Apostle John.

The history contained in any one of these volumes is different in character from that contained in either of the other two. The first volume contains a succession of pictures of the most primitive conditions of human society, pictures of pastoral and nomadic life, of separate tribal relations, of delightful

family scenes, and of interesting neighbourhood associations. In the second volume we have a succession of pictures of national life, illustrating all varieties of national existence, from the gradual forming of the nation, the gathering of its constituent parts under the most adverse circumstances, the migration of the colonists to their new home, the drafting of their first code of laws, the institution of their forms of worship; up through the various stages of government; first a species of republic, struggling with the aborigines for the complete possession and proper occupancy of the soil; next a monarchy with a king upon the throne, reigning in triumph, with all his enemies subdued round about him; a prosperous kingdom building temples and palaces, and constructing other great public works; then a kingdom troubled by internal dissension, resulting in national division with perpetual hostility existing between the two parts; next a kingdom harassed by foreign invasion, with all those phases of national life which are developed by the allying of neighbouring powers against a nation which they mutually dislike; then the decline and overthrow of the nation, its captivity, and at last the return of its shattered remnant

to re-inhabit the country from which it had been carried captive, though to occupy it, not as an independent nation, but as the tributary of a more powerful people.

The third volume, the New Testament, contains the history, not of families and communities with their various phases of social life ; nor of a nation, with its varied political history ; but mainly the history of the origin of the Church of modern times, with the life of its Great Founder, and some account also of those who were more immediately associated with Him in the work. But as the name Church has come to have an ambiguous meaning, the third volume may be spoken of as containing the history of the spread of the truth, not with special reference to its bearing upon either national or family life, but with reference to its bearing upon the best welfare of mankind generally. The history contained in the New Testament is the history of the spread of leaven. Little account is taken of the temporal circumstances of those from whom this leaven emanates, nor of those into whose lives it makes its way. The leaven makes no distinctions. In its presence the ruler and the ruled are all one. It suits alike

the beggar by the wayside and them that are of Cæsar's household. It is for the Jew as well as the Gentile, and for the Gentile as well as the Jew. This third volume of Scripture contains the very essence of all truth. It presents in a new form those eternal principles which must underlie human life whether in the individual, the family, the community or the nation. It contains the same truth indeed which was taught in the two preceding volumes, but it presents its application on so broad and grand a scale, as to assure us, that however men's outward circumstances may change, and whatever advances man may make in general knowledge, the essential truths taught by Jesus and His Apostles can never be set aside, nor in any way improved upon.

The Bible is the most comprehensively natural of all books. Other books are artificial; they are constructed upon a human plan. The Bible is constructed upon a plan, not a human plan however, but the same general plan upon which the whole system of nature is constructed,—the combining of endless variety with the most minute adaptation to the ten thousand wants of man. In the system of

nature we have sun, moon and stars; the earth and the air; the land and the sea; a wondrous variety of beasts, birds and fishes; trees, plants and flowers; rocks, metals and soils: chemical elements and mechanical combinations; and to the casual observer all these may seem to be scattered about in glorious confusion. Yet they all form one system, and all the parts of that system have reference to the well-being of this world's chief occupant. We observe in the Bible a similar diversity, and a similar adaptation to human wants.

The Bible is a growth, but it is a growth from a divine germ—a germ which contained within it eternal possibilities. If an ordinary book may be compared to a tree, the Bible may be compared to a forest. In it are trees of all kinds, and the leaves of every one of them are for the healing of the nations. In it are all kinds of fragrant flowers, so that the smell thereof is as Lebanon. In it also are rocky steeps and even waste and solitary places which have their use.

Certain familiar features of the diversity connected with the Bible are often referred to, and may be mentioned here for the fuller illustration of the

comprehensive naturalness of the Book. Take for example the circumstances under which the Bible was written;—not by one man, nor by ten, nor by any number of joint authors agreeing to write the Book in such a way that it would contain one general thought and theme; but by at least forty different writers, not living in the same country and age, but widely scattered over the east, and covering a period of more than fifteen hundred years. One in the world's great capital, with powerful empires built up round about him, another on the sands of Arabia, back at the time when empires were only beginning to be founded; one in a palace at Babylon, another on the banks of the Chebar, another in a prison at Rome;—men not speaking the same language, nor resembling each other in natural disposition, nor occupying the same sphere in life; but one a king, another a shepherd; one a warrior, another a man of peace; one writing in Hebrew, another in Greek. Nor did they write upon the same subject, or with the same object in view; but one wrote history to transmit the doings of men to posterity, another wrote songs to comfort his own heart in a time of trouble; one framed laws, another

uttered proverbs, a third wrote biography ; one gave an account of the incidents of travel, another wrote familiar letters to his friends, a third related the visions of his head upon his bed.

Another thing to be noted in connection with this comprehensive naturalness of the Bible, is, the unity which pervades it from first to last. If there is unity amid all the diversity in external nature, there is similar unity amid all the diversity of the Book of Revelation. If there is one all-embracing law of gravity in the material world, there is also an all-embracing law of gravity in the world of Scripture. God is the centre, and all the truth the Scriptures contain tends uniformly toward Him, drawing mankind with it, as with a power which emanates from God alone. And if there are typical forms in creation, indicating that all creatures, from the lowest plant to the highest animal, have been fashioned according to one governing idea, which has found its highest realization in man ; so also is there a succession of typical forms in Revelation, indicating that the Book has been constructed upon one ruling plan, in accordance with which everything, from the first faint promise to the last clear voice, has pointed for-

ward, until it has found its complete realization in the person of the God-man.

There is even a correspondence in this respect between the three kingdoms of nature, the mineral, the vegetable and the animal, and the three volumes of Scripture. But there is nothing pertaining to the general form and structure of the Bible that shows more strikingly, both its comprehensive naturalness and its marked completeness, than the gradually ascending progress of doctrine in each of its three parts, and in the Book as a whole. In the early portion of each of these three parts of Scripture, there is contained a law which is to be the rule of life for the age to which it belongs, and the essence of which is to be carried forward to form the basis of the law of each succeeding part. In the middle portion of each volume there is the application of this law to human life in its various relations, and at the close of each there is a prophetic preparation for the immediate future. In the early part of Genesis, for example, we find the law laid down in such words as—"Be fruitful, and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it, and have dominion;"¹ "Therefore shall a man leave his father

and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh ;”¹ “ Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat : But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it ; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die ;”² “ In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground ; for out of it wast thou taken ; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return ;”³ “ But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. And surely your blood of your lives will I require ; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man ; at the hand of every man’s brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man ;”⁴ “ And I, behold I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you ;”⁵ “ I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.”⁶

Then in the middle portion of Genesis, in the lives of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and their households, we have an illustration of the weaving of this law into the life both of the individual and

the family. And in the closing portion of the Book we have an account of Jacob's gathering his sons around his bedside and addressing to them that prophecy which forms so fitting a preparation for the history which was to follow.

In the opening of the second part of the Bible, we find the law laid down in the form of the Ten Commandments, and other enactments contained in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. From the beginning of the Book of Joshua to the end of the Book of Esther, we have an illustration of the weaving of this law into national life. In the poetical books from Job to the Song of Solomon, there is the interweaving of this law with the individual and heart-life of the people. Then follow the prophetical books, from Isaiah to Malachi, forming a most fitting preparation for the history which was to follow in the New Testament dispensation.

In the third part of Scripture, the New Testament, we find the highest of all laws in the life and teaching of Jesus as recorded in the first four books. In the Acts of the Apostles, and several of the Epistles there is the weaving of this law into the Church's

life, and also—especially in the later Epistles—into individual life. And in the last Book, the Apocalypse, that sublimest of all prophecies, there is the preparation for the history still to follow, not here alone, but hereafter.

As external nature reached, in man, a culmination beyond which it is impossible for nature to pass; so in the closing book of the Bible, Revelation reached its perfect close. The prophecy which closed the first volume had reference to earthly scenes; the prophecies which closed the second volume had still reference mainly to things to be done on earth; but the prophecies which close the third and last volume mount above the earth and speak of things pertaining to the Great Hereafter,—thus indicating that nothing can be added until the present order of things shall have passed away, and all things shall have become new.

The comprehensive naturalness of the Bible is further observable in the perfect adjustment of Divine Revelation to human conditions. The book which is to suit all ages, must possess this characteristic, that while it furnishes to the earliest and most illiterate ages the truth they need, it must furnish

that truth to them in such language as will convey to them only as much truth as they are capable of receiving, and at the same time in such language as will admit of a constantly expanding interpretation to suit the gradual advance of general knowledge. It must be perfectly adapted to the circumstances of those for whom it is immediately written, yet must as perfectly meet the requirements of all who shall come after them,—never telling to any people more than they can bear, yet never falling behind the progress of the ages, nor proving inadequate to meet the condition in which mankind in any future period of the world's history may be found. Why are we not told in the opening words of Genesis how long it is since the beginning mentioned there ; and how the various strata of the earth's crust were formed ; and how the earth was made spherical in shape, hung upon nothing and sent circling round the sun ? Manifestly because this knowledge was not needed then, and had it been imparted, would have so far transcended all man's powers of observation and research, that man would have been unable to receive it, and would have been in danger of rejecting the whole record. It was necessary that the light should

dawn upon the world gradually, lest it should blind men by its sudden effulgence, and defeat the end for which it was sent. Accordingly, the Great Revealer stood back at the beginning of our world's history, holding all truth in His hand, but letting out only a single ray at a time; yet that first ray was so admirably adjusted that it furnishes light enough for us to read by, yet was not so bright originally as to dazzle those upon whom it directly beamed. The account of the six days' Creation recorded in the first chapter of Genesis, commends itself to the learned and unlearned alike. The modern Christian Geologist sees it to be in accordance with his latest researches, while the early Fathers who had made no such researches, saw nothing in it which they could not receive as true. And wherever there has been conflict between popular opinion and true science, the Bible has always been found to be on the winning side.

What is true of this natural elasticity of Bible language regarding matters of science, is equally true of the form in which it has revealed higher truth. By examining the gradually unfolding promises of a coming Messiah, as these promises are

recorded throughout the Old Testament, we find that they contain the very truth that was immediately in demand; they always contain the Gospel—good news—a cheering word, spoken at a time when it was much needed, and the very word that was needed to meet the existing form of despondency. To our first parents, humbled to the dust because of having ignominiously fallen under the power of an enemy stronger than themselves, the promise was of the coming of One who should bruise that enemy under foot. To Abram, dejected over the prospect of his going down to the grave childless, the promise was that he should yet become a great nation, and that in his seed all families of the earth should be blessed. To Jacob, dying in Egypt, with no good prospect that his family would ever be gathered back to their own land to become an independent people there, the prophet's vision brought the cheering words: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."¹

To the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness, and ready to faint at the thought that

Moses in whom they trusted could not be always with them, and was liable to be removed at any time, the promise came, through the lips of the very man in whom they confided most, uttering the words: "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me."¹ To the Jewish people at a later time, when they saw that their condition as a nation was becoming worse and worse from year to year, and that the true Davidic stock was almost clean perished from among them, so that there was no prospect of the coming of their deliverer, the promise was sent in the words: "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots."² And to the pious Jews of a still later time, who saw that notwithstanding all the faithful admonitions of the prophets, the nation had gone wholly over to idolatry, and without the direct interposition of God, all must be lost,—the form of the promise was: "Behold, I will send My Messenger."

We may wish that these promises had been more clear—so clear that they would have preached the Gospel in early times in such a way that men would

have understood it then precisely as we understand it now ; but it is a vain wish. It could not be. To have revealed the fact of the death of the Messiah in the way in which it actually occurred, would have been to have cut the ground of faith from beneath all Jewish feet, as well as otherwise defeat the end for which the Messiah came. It is enough if the promises of His coming were always God's cheering news to those to whom they were addressed, and the very news they needed. If we can see in the unfolding of those promises what they of old time could not see, we need only remember with becoming gratitude the Saviour's words: "Blessed are your eyes, for they see ; and your ears for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them ; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."¹

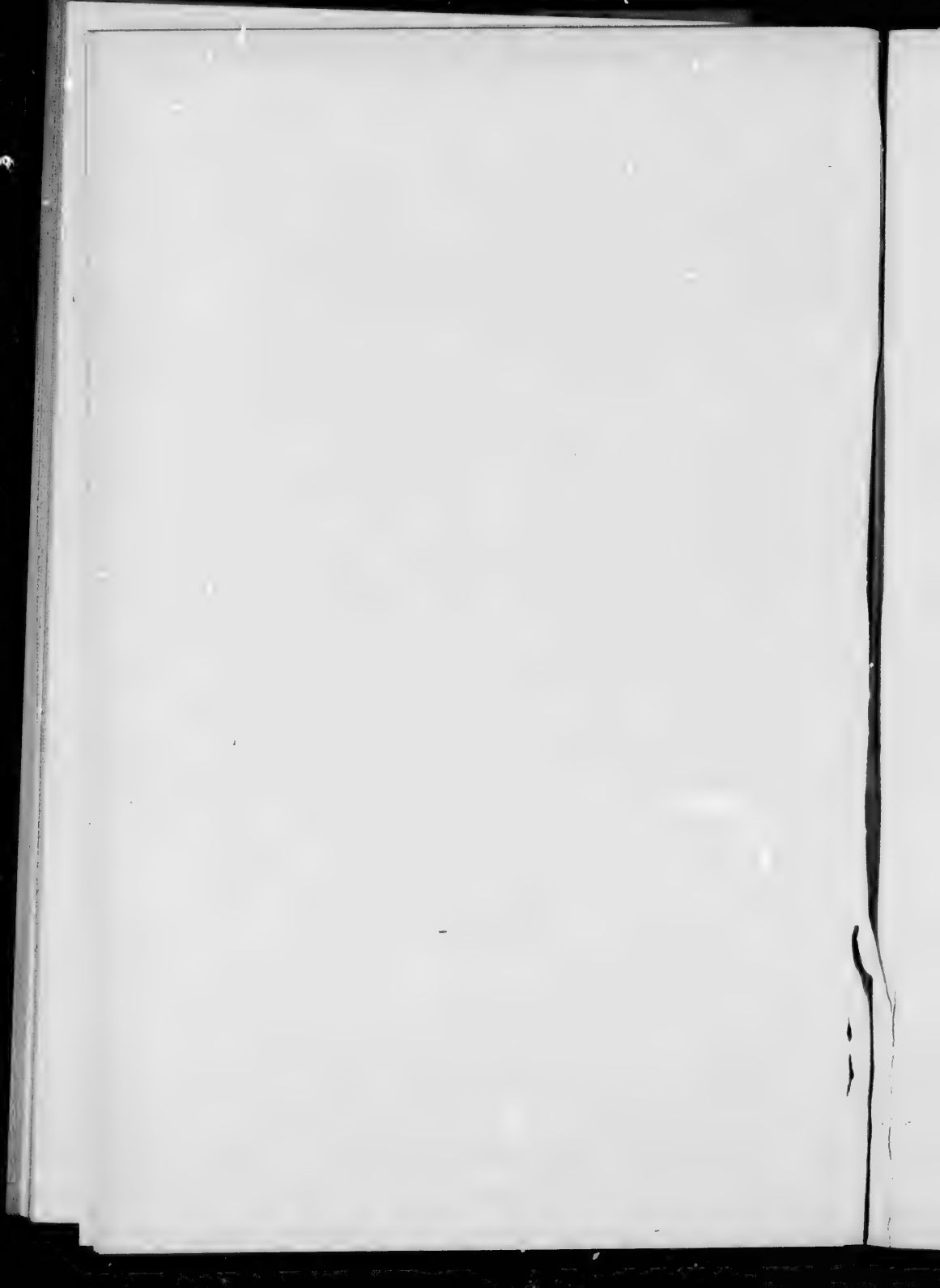
The whole plan upon which the Scriptures have been written is indicated in the words, "With many such parables spake he the word unto them as they were able to hear it."² The Great Teacher, when in the world in person, often found it necessary to speak in parables, and even then many went back

and walked no more with Him. He could have told His own disciples much more than He did, or than even we would yet be able to receive. "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."¹ God is the revealer of mysteries, yet "it is the glory of God to conceal a thing."² "He holdeth back the face of his throne and spreadeth his cloud upon it."³

There are other ways in which Divine Revelation is adjusted to human conditions, as, for example, by furnishing all the counsel and comfort needed to meet man's daily wants. It has been the testimony of human experience in the past, that a man can be placed in no circumstances, whether of prosperity or adversity, joy or sorrow, in which the Bible cannot furnish him the very truth he requires. It abounds in entertaining and instructive lessons for the young, and it contains the most gratifying news for the old. It rejoices with them that rejoice, and weeps with them that weep. It has a message alike for husband and wife, for parent and child, for master and servant, for the captive in the dungeon and for the freeman in the exercise of the privileges of his citizenship. In whatever direction we turn, we see new

arguments rising up to confirm our belief, that the Bible is humanity's one great Book, not to be approached by any other, never to be superseded nor in anywise set aside. A Book as nicely adapted to man's social and spiritual wants, as the provisions of external nature are adapted to his natural and material wants. Truly the same Infinite Mind who planned man's being, and planned at the same time the whole system of nature around him, must have presided over the writing of our Sacred Scriptures, with all man's higher wants in view, saying as He looked on, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."¹





CHAPTER X.

MUST SCRIPTURE TRUTH BE SYSTEM-
ATIZED.





CHAPTER X.

MUST SCRIPTURE TRUTH BE SYSTEMATIZED ?

WE come now to enquire how the Bible must be used. Shall we use it as we find it, in all the glory of its diversity ? Or shall we reduce its truth, as far as we understand it, to a system, and feed mainly upon that ? Or shall we adopt and combine both methods ?

The Christian world has reduced the teaching of the Bible to a threefold system. It has made the Scriptures furnish the church of modern times with a liturgy, a polity and a theology ; or rather, with liturgies, polities and theologies, for the forms of worship deduced from Scripture are numerous, the forms of government are equally so, and the systems of doctrine are not less varied.

Must Scripture truth be systematized ?

We nowhere find it laid down in Scripture that

we are even to attempt to reduce the word of revelation to a logical system. Certain portions of the Bible itself are elaborately formulized, for purposes both of public worship and ecclesiastical government; the Jewish ritual, for example. Other portions consist of extended argument, so skilfully wrought as to furnish, in the opinion of some at least, an elaborate system of doctrine, as in Paul's epistle to the Romans. But it would be unsafe to argue that because the writers of the Sacred Scriptures did such things, therefore we are to do the same. What men under the special guidance of Divine inspiration may do in preparing a complete Bible for humanity, is one thing; but what ordinary men must do with that revelation after they have received it, may be a very different thing. Paul in writing even to Timothy said, "Hold fast *the form of sound words* which thou hast heard of me."¹ The principle just indicated has been recognised by the framers of the leading Scriptural Creeds and Confessions. Take the Westminster Standards for example. It is not once claimed that the framing of the system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, has been demanded by the Word of God. It is claimed

that every article of those Standards is founded upon the Word of God, and agreeable thereto, but the framing of those Standards is claimed to be a matter, not of Divine injunction, but of human expediency. The Westminster Assembly did not even receive its powers and prerogatives from the Church. It was the creature of the State. It met "at Westminster in the chapel called King Henry the Seventh's Chapel, on the first day of July, one thousand six hundred and forty-three," not at the call of an ecclesiastical tribunal, but upon the order of "both Houses of Parliament." Its work was mapped out for it by Parliament, Its Prolocutor, Dr. William Twisse, was appointed by Parliament. Its members were paid by the State, in accordance with the following enactment; "And be it further ordained by the authority aforesaid, that for the charges and expenses of the said Divines, and everyone of them, in attending the said service, there shall be allowed everyone of them that shall so attend, during the time for their said attendance, and for ten days before and ten days after, the sum of four shillings for every day, at the charges of the Commonwealth, at such time and in such manner as by both Houses

of Parliament shall be appointed." And in case of any difference of opinion arising among the members of the Assembly touching any of the matters proposed for their consideration, the appeal was to the Parliament. The Assembly was not allowed to divulge the results of its deliberations, either "by printing, writing or otherwise without the consent of both or either Houses of Parliament." And the Confession and Catechisms were finally issued by the supreme authority of the State. To us who believe we live in an age of peculiar civil and religious progress, it should perhaps be somewhat humiliating to find that one of the Acts of the Parliament which met at Edinburgh in the year 1649, is entitled "An Act anent the Catechisms, Confession of Faith, and ratification thereof," providing as follows:—"The Estates of Parliament, now presently convened in this second session of the second triennial Parliament, by virtue of an Act of the Committee of Estates, who had power and authority from the last Parliament for convening the Parliament, having seriously considered the Catechisms, viz. the Larger and Shorter ones, with the Confession of Faith, with three Acts of Approbation thereof by the Commis-

sioners of the General Assembly, presented unto them by the Commissioners of the said General Assembly; do ratify and approve the said Catechisms, Confession of Faith, and Acts of Approbation of the same, produced as it is; and ordain them to be recorded, published and practised." These Standards therefore were originally a state document, or, to speak more definitely, a Church and State document. A fact, however, which does not in any way affect their intrinsic worth. The sentence, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever," is equally true, whether given to the world by authority of the State, or by authority of the Church, or with the authority of both, or without the authority of either. Its lustre is of itself too bright to be at all intensified by the authority of any earthly organization whatsoever, but contrariwise, the fact that it was first given to the world, in its present form, under State authority, reflects great honour upon the Commonwealth from beneath whose throne it issued. But what is chiefly before us now, is, that the framing of these venerable Standards has been a matter of human, and not of Divine enactment; and that neither these Standards

nor the Sacred Scriptures themselves, do anywhere teach, that Scripture truth must of necessity be systematized. So thoroughly does the Westminster Confession of Faith recognise that when even the wisest Assemblies of Divines undertake to systematize the teaching of Scripture, they do so upon their own responsibility, and at no small risk of both going astray themselves and misleading others, that it specially provides, that while Synods and Councils have their place and value, their decrees and determinations are to be brought to the test of Scripture, and received with the utmost caution; and are never to be regarded as of equal authority with Scripture itself. "All synods or councils since the Apostles' times," says the Westminster Confession, chapter xxxi, section iv, "whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred; therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as an help in both."

But is there not something in the nature of Scripture truth, or in its adaptation to human need, which demands that it be formulized in order to accomplish its true end? In other words, Can the Word of God not exert a saving influence upon man's heart and

life, until it is received into the mind in the form of a philosophical system?

On one occasion Jesus said in His teaching,—“So is the Kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.”¹ The good seed of the Kingdom is so fine as to be impalpable. It can neither be seen by the naked eye, nor made visible by the strongest magnifier,—nor analysed by the subtlest processes of the intellect. It is not in the power of human reason to detect the method of its growth. No man has ever been able to comprehend the relation between the receiving of a truth into the mind, and the effect which that truth produces upon the character,—even as no one has ever understood the mystery of the growth of a plant from an invisible germ. Nor would understanding the matter make any change upon the result in either case. It is neither understanding the analysis of the seed and its manner of growth, nor is it casting it into the ground according to the latest ap-

proved method, that secures fruitage ; it is the condition of the earth into which the seed is dropped ; let the soil be right and whether the seed be sown in the field of the well-skilled botanist, or the most illiterate peasant, it will grow. "The earth bringeth forth fruit of herself." It is not with the head, but "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." ¹

"Those root-truths on which the foundations of being rest are apprehended not logically at all, but mystically." ² "When once awakened, the spiritual faculty far outgoes all systems, scientific, philosophic, or theological, and apprehends and lives by truths which these cannot reduce to system." ³ It is by "something that may dwell upon the heart though it be not named upon the tongue," that human life is often most powerfully influenced. It is through Christ alone that man can be saved ; yet "it is not the critic's eye, but the child's heart, that most truly discerns the countenance that looks out from the pages of the gospels." ⁴ "Again and again," said Neander,—quoting from Niebuhr, "have I said that I know not what to do with a metaphysical God ; and that I will have no other but the God of the Bible, who is heart to heart."

The experiences of every day should be sufficient to teach us that it is not so much through the purely intellectual, as through the emotional parts of our nature, that our characters are chiefly moulded. The most potent influences are those which can be embodied in no set form. Take home love for example,—that mysterious bond which knits the members of the family together and makes the home a type of heaven. Who can analyse and understand that influence? Who can define it in such terms as will make it a thing to be learned by rote and acquired at will by the intellect? Or who has not had his heart touched and thrilled by the strains of sweet music,—music which uttered no word, but came in upon the soul and spread its mellow voice over the whole being like a balm of peace, producing an impression upon the heart and life, such as no sharply defined thought could have produced? Or on the morning of a peaceful Sabbath, who, on entering the house of God, has not had his heart lifted heavenward by the devout appearance of the worshippers and the solemn air of the sanctuary, even before a word was uttered? And when the service was opened with prayer and the singing of a spiritual

song, and the Word was devoutly read,—it was not alone the sweet meaning of the Word of God that was so comforting and sanctifying ; it was the breath of Divinity which it breathed. The Bible is not limited to any particular method of appeal to the human heart. It is wondrously varied as to its contents, to suit varying human circumstances ; and the methods by which the Spirit applies its truths are equally varied. “There are diversities of operations.”¹ At one time the truth is stated in a philosophical form which makes the strongest demands upon the intellect, as if man were challenged to a reasoning contest with the Almighty, in which if the Kingdom would be taken at all it must be taken by force. At another time the truth is seemingly obscured by being wrapped about with the mists of distant ages, or is but faintly discernible amid the flames of the prophet’s fiery chariot ; or again it seeks to lure man God-ward, as with quaint simplicity it leads him back to the beginning of things and invites him to meditate upon a plain and truthful narrative of events pertaining to a dispensation that has passed away, or upon bold predictions that reach far on into the future. And not the least

powerful of the features of Sacred Scripture, is the beautiful dress in which its truth is clothed,—whether the highly poetic and richly figurative speech of the Ancient Hebrew, or the more philosophical language of the Greek, or the simple, heart-touching, homelike Saxon of our English Bible.

The various figures under which saving truth is represented in Scripture, also indicate that a scientific acquaintance with that truth, is not essential in order to our being savingly influenced by it. Divine truth is called bread. Is a scientific acquaintance with the properties of wheat and flour, or even a knowledge of the art of bread-making essential in order to our being nourished by bread? Divine truth is called water. Is it necessary that we understand the chemical analysis of water before it will quench our thirst? Divine truth is called light. Must we know all the properties and laws of light before it will bless us with its beams?

“Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.”¹ Who will say that

the rain and the dew must be analysed and systematized by man, before they will bless the earth? Why should it be thought essential that we reduce to one all-embracing human system, that truth which is as varied, and as minutely adapted to man's wants, as external nature itself? Or that we accurately formulize that pure word of revelation, which wraps the heart about like the sunlight or the air we breathe, and flows in upon the soul through ten thousand secret avenues? Had not the truths which it is all important for man to know, been revealed in the simplest forms, we might reason otherwise, but with the ten commandments written by the finger of God in words so plain that the most illiterate age can read and understand them; with the sermon on the mount recorded for man's use in language as clear and pure as the speech of childhood; with the great gift of God's love, for the redemption of the world, offered in terms so simple, that even little children do actually understand the terms, and accept the gift; with all needed precepts and promises sparkling like the dew-drops of heaven over the whole face of revelation; we see nothing that imperatively demands that Scripture truth be

reduced to a humanly devised philosophical system.

But we must go further than this, and say that it is not in man's power to reduce revelation to a perfect system. The inability of the Bible students of this age, or of all ages, to agree upon any one system of Divine truth, should of itself be enough to convince us of this. Man's premises are not complete to begin with. The Bible contains truth concerning God, all the truth man needs in the present life, yet not all that is to be known concerning God, and concerning many subjects which have been adverted to in Scripture in connection with the revelation of God's will, and therefore not all the truth that is necessary to form the basis of a perfect system, even if man had succeeded in interpreting correctly and fully all that has been revealed. Many of God's dealings may seem unreasonable to man, and yet be perfectly reasonable to one who can sit where God sits, and take into view circumstances which cannot possibly be seen from man's point of vision, and with man's limited powers. But even had God poured all knowledge around man—had this been possible—man would still have been unable to systematize that knowledge. Man is an

infant of days, and God is the eternal Father ; and shall the child be expected to comprehend all the father's business ? " He who, in religious things, desires to think truly, not to say reverently, cannot too soon learn that he must be content to see in part and to know in part, to find a true link here, and another there, but must not expect in this life to connect them into one completed chain." ¹ " O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out ? For who hath known the mind of the Lord ? or who hath been his counsellor ? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again ? For of him, and through him and to him are all things ; to whom be glory for ever, amen." ²

But does not the human mind demand a system of truth ? It does ; yet not necessarily an elaborate or perfect system. The mind demands definite knowledge, and must have it. Without such knowledge there can be no belief, and nothing worthy of the name of faith. But the Bible supplies an abundance of definite knowledge ; and the heart that takes the plain precepts of Scripture as the guide of

its life, finds it easy to frame a satisfactory creed. For by doing God's will the heart soon learns to know of the doctrine: "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." ¹

The theological system which the many humble children of God scattered up and down the earth, live by, is a very simple system. Those pious hearts take a few of the great truths contained in the Bible, and fit them together as if by intuition, so that they form the few links of the golden chain of love and faith, which binds them to their God, who to them is not far away. This is true of the learned and the unlearned alike among God's children. Perplexing mysteries, and subtle theological distinctions, are not the things by which men live, and in which is the life of their spirit. It is only in their studies that good men are great theologians, or great in natural science. In their closets before God they are the humblest children, and in their daily life before men they are the gentlest companions.

But must not the *religious teacher* be well skilled in the science of religion, and in the truths of Scripture upon which that science is based? As well skilled as it is possible for him to be. He must

have a definitely framed Scriptural creed for himself, and to teach to those who are unable to frame a creed for themselves, by reason of their beginning to frame their creed before attending to the doing of the will. For, unfortunately, there are many who set to work in this way, "adjourning the doing of the doctrine, hastening to busy themselves with the theory of it." The religious teacher must be acquainted with the whole field of systematic and historical theology, that he may be able to guard men against traversing ground which has been fruitlessly traversed by men of various shades of religious belief, since the earliest centuries. He must be well versed in exegetical theology also, that he may learn what is the mind of the Spirit, and be able rightly to divide the Word of Truth. And of these departments of theology the last must be first and chief. For "the man who would think truly on spiritual things must first be spiritually-minded." It is easy to be a good logician, not easy to be a good theologian. "Clear and trained intellect is one thing, spiritual discernment quite another." Humility and true devotion are the first pre-requisites, in order to the successful study of the little real theology any man can learn

on earth. In the language of the German theologian Rothe:—"It is only the pious subject that can speculate theologically. And why? Because it is he alone who has the original datum, in virtue of communion with God, on which the dialectic lays hold. So soon as the original datum is there, everything else becomes simply a matter of logic." Theological "speculations" may be of little value, but a comparison of the lives of eminent theologians, with the theological treatises they have brought out, will be found to justify Rothe's sentiment. The now sainted father who recently bequeathed to the world an invaluable legacy, in the form of his three volumes of "Systematic Theology,"¹ which are by very general consent regarded as unrivalled in theological literature, was the broad and deep religious thinker that he was, not so much because of his rare erudition—rare indeed though that was—as because of his genuine Christ-likeness of spirit. "The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way."² "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."³

May Scripture truth be arranged by man in some systematic order then? Assuredly it may; and

when wisely engaged in and properly pursued, nothing can be more worshipful to God, more honouring to human intelligence, and more beneficial to the human heart, than this critical searching of the Scriptures. "The works of God are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein,"¹ and the same thing must be true of His Word. If the study of the natural sciences be honourable and profitable, the study of the science of religion, within proper limits, and with becoming humility, is surely not less so.

The answer we find to be given to the question, "Must scripture truth be systematized?" is,—That the honour of God, and the best well-being of man, alike require that the Bible be diligently studied, but the extent to which its truth shall be systematized, whether for purposes of doctrine, worship, or government, is purely a matter of expediency; and in no case must any humanly devised system be placed between man and his Bible, so as to become the rule of faith and practice, and thus supersede the Word of God.

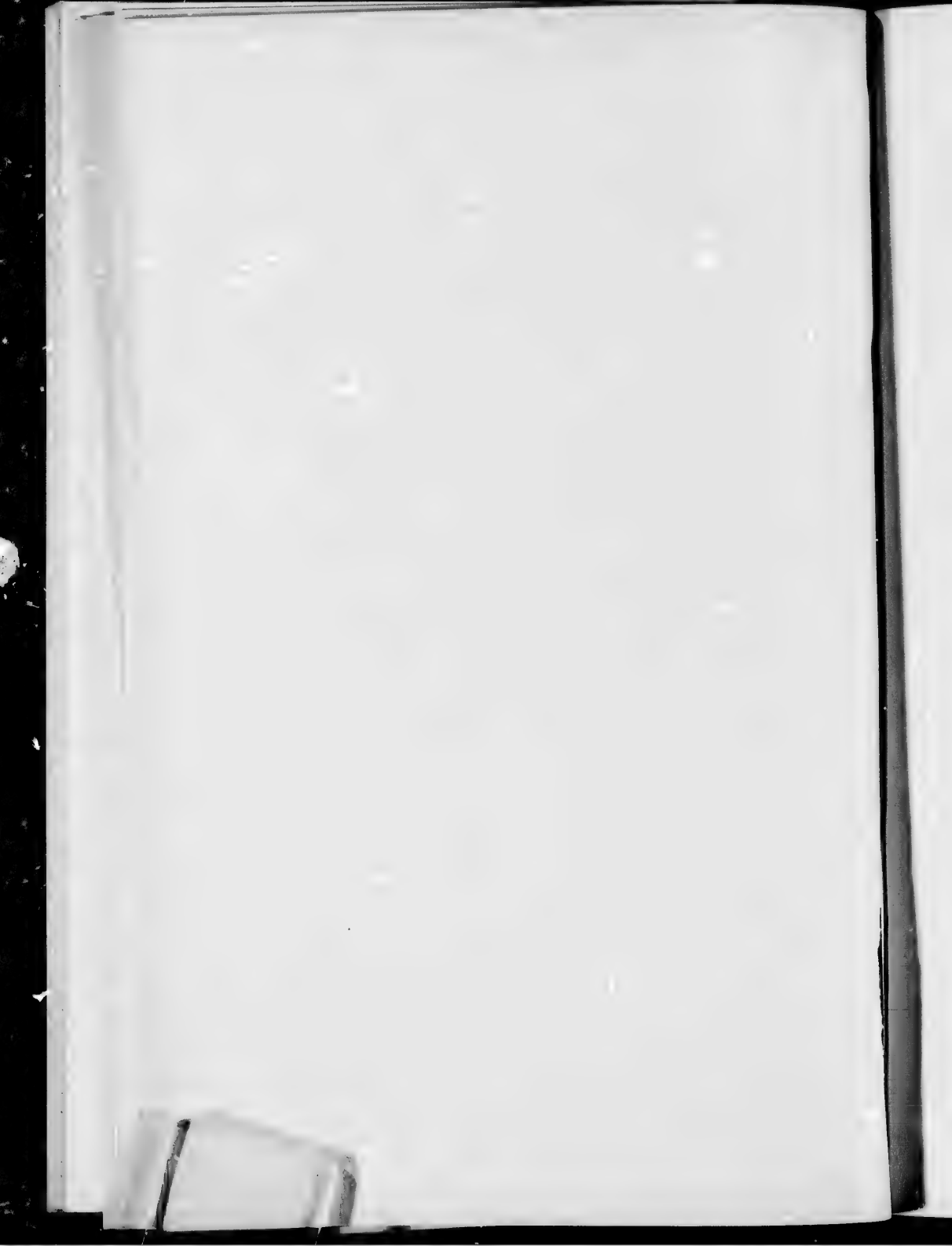
The Bible must be regarded as of supreme authority. Its teaching must never be brought to the

test of what is taught in any other book, but on the contrary, the Bible must be made the touchstone to the test of which every other book, and every creed and confession must be brought. Then the Bible must be read often, read independently, read in its own light, and in the light of the times in which it was written, read humbly and prayerfully with the light of nature and human experience shining upon it, and read as a whole. Even those portions of Scripture which seem to be uninteresting, and almost meaningless, can have a truly healthful influence upon human life. The reader who passes by these portions, misses the full benefit the Scriptures are designed to convey. The man who confines his study to particular parts of the Bible, or to a few doctrines which he regards as the essence of what the whole book contains, will become narrow in his religious views, and will be in danger of starving his soul for lack of a sufficient quantity of spiritual food. For in spiritual as in natural sustenance, the quantity must be taken into account as well as the quality. In the food that is eaten at every meal, the purely nutritious part might be condensed into very little bulk, yet the substance that

is not directly nutritious, must be taken along with the nutriment, if the man would enjoy vigorous health. And if a man would receive the full benefit to be derived from the essential elements of truth which the Bible contains, he must take these elements, not alone, but together with the whole mass of matter with which by Divine appointment they have been so skilfully commingled. The bread of heaven relishes best when partaken of together with the apples of Sodom. The rose of Sharon is never so attractive as when seen growing on its thorny tree, and amid the foliage which naturally belongs to it. "Jesus Christ and Him crucified," the Saviour and the Cross—these are the truths which must mysteriously operate upon the heart to bless it; but they do not stand alone. There are Roman soldiers, and a jeering multitude, and weeping women, and timid disciples standing around, and darkness covers the whole land, so that we can but dimly see the cross and Him who hangs upon it; but it is only by taking all the circumstances together, that the scene will properly influence the heart with its saving power. "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.*"

CHAPTER XI.

SECTS, SYSTEMS, AND THE CHURCH.





CHAPTER XI.

SECTS, SYSTEMS, AND THE CHURCH.

THERE are inquiring natures in the world, who see mysteries everywhere, yet cannot endure to dwell in the midst of mystery. They must know and understand things. They dislike the darkness, and must grope their way through it in search of light. And if they fail to find light by searching, they must invent it, or something they will regard as a substitute. Like Peter on the mount,¹ they wish to have the mysterious feature of even the most sacred scene dissipated, and the scene itself utilized, by being brought down to the level of every day life, or at least to the level of their own comprehension. This disposition is shared more or less by everyone, and serves many important ends. In early times it led to the study of Astrology and

Astronomy. By night men beheld the fashion of the countenance of the sky changed, and as they watched the trembling and glistening of its garments, they said, "Let us make a tabernacle;" not simply let us worship, but let us have all the phenomena of the heavens brought within the compass of our knowledge. And when they looked upon the earth and saw trees, plants and flowers array themselves before them in beautiful and fantastic forms, they resolved to have them also included within a tabernacle of knowledge. When they saw all the tribes of animated nature spread out before them in gorgeous variety, they at once proceeded to construct a system of knowledge to include them all. Even the strange forms which lie bedded in the crust of the earth they could not allow to lie neglected and unknown. And when they looked upon man, the transfigured and glorified perfection of all they had previously observed, they said, Let us make three tabernacles, one for the body, another for the mind, and a third for the soul.

It was out of the materials thus furnished them by nature, that men constructed their first systems of theology, in regions where, the word of God was

not in spoken or written form. And those to whom the Sacred Scriptures have been given, cannot be content to walk through this vast forest of truth, plucking a flower here, eating the fruit there, and admiring the beauty and sublimity everywhere; they must have the sum of all that the Bible contains, compressed within the compass of a few well arranged sentences, that they may believe they know the essence of it all.

But the origin of religious systems is to be found in other things besides man's natural disposition to inquire and investigate. There is a certain vague fear coupled with this native disposition. Man feels that all is not right between himself and his Maker. He regards himself as a fugitive from justice, and he looks about him anxiously lest a detective be on his track. He is suspicious of all the dark corners of nature where power may be supposed to lurk. He is startled by every unfamiliar sight and sound. Place before him anything that is strangely complicated, as the framework of nature, or the tangled half-woven web of human history, or the collected writings of inspired men, and he will instantly suspect that what is before him has some reference to

himself, and to the ordering of his destiny. There steals over him a feeling of sacred awe, and his wish is that light were thrown upon the subject. And the deeper and darker the subject, the more anxious is he to have it illuminated. The greater his own ignorance, the more desperate will be his efforts to strike a light by which he may see to choose his steps. He brings to his aid the feeble light of his natural reason. By means of this he examines the matter and constructs a theory in accordance with such facts as may be dimly visible. He examines his theory with care, and tests it by such rules of judgment as are known to him. He finds it more or less consistent throughout and is happy. This lamp which he has thus trimmed and lighted at the torch of his own reason, is henceforward to be his guide. It is sacred to him. His eternal welfare is associated with it. If at any time it is in danger of being blown out by a wind of doctrine coming from some contrary direction, how carefully will he guard it! It must not be even fanned by the gentlest breath of outside knowledge. And the feebler and more precarious a man's system of truth is, the more earnestly will he defend it. He strives to make up by

zeal what he lacks in knowledge. In the religious conflicts of the ages, the fiercest struggles have not been over the importance of obeying laws which have been plainly revealed for man's practical guidance; but over human theories concerning secret things which belong unto God, and which have been only incidentally referred to in Scripture; or even over things which have had no existence save in the minds of those who have fought for them.

But the framing of systems, and the dividing of the world into religious sects, has had yet another, a more pleasing cause, man's sense of responsibility for the enjoyment of peculiar privileges. No good man has ever enjoyed any new heavenly experience, without wishing that the vision could be made to tarry, that others might enjoy it along with him. Many of the great religious systems of the world, as well as many of the minor beliefs, are simply tents erected over the peculiar religious experiences of certain men. This is to some extent true of each of the great pagan religions which has had its origin in a single individual. It is true in a happier sense of the various divisions of the Protestant Church, and especially of the Protestant Church as a whole.

When Luther heard the words, "the just shall live by faith," sounded in his ears, he felt that God was speaking to him, and that the moment was one of solemn privilege; and in his heart of hearts he wished that all could hear the truth as it had then broken in upon his soul. And, finding those who afterwards became his companions in the Great Reformation work, he said to them, let us build a tabernacle for this truth, "the just shall live by faith"; and accordingly the Protestant Church was established, and the one truth which has shone gloriously throughout it from the beginning, has been justification, not by works or penances or prayers, but by faith in the finished work of the only begotten Son of God.

It would be easy to show by numerous illustrations, how different sects within the pale of the Protestant Church have arisen in a similar way. One man, inspired by his view of one aspect of God's character, has built a tabernacle in honour of the heavenly visitor whose transfigured presence he has been privileged to behold, and the world has called his well-wrought structure Calvinism. Another man, taken up to the third heaven in his contemplation of another aspect of the Divine nature, has constructed a

tabernacle in honour of the heavenly visitor whose transfigured presence he has beheld, and the world has called his skilfully contrived system Arminianism. And so numerous have systems and sects now become, that there is scarcely a known feature in the character of God, or in the teachings of his Word, which has not a separate tent erected over it, in which some delight to worship.

The aggregate of all these sects and systems is popularly known as the Church, and the Church is acknowledged to be of Divine institution: "The Lord hath founded Zion."¹ Some claim that only their own sect is of Divine appointment, but this claim now meets with little general favour. The disposition on the part of any particular branch of the Church to lay claim to being the veritable Zion the Lord hath founded, arises from a misconception of what is meant by Zion, and a misunderstanding of the purpose for which the Church has been established. They imagine that by Zion is meant, not a kingdom whose throne hath been "prepared" in the heavens, and all whose appointments are adjusted with reference to the circumstances and wants of the subjects, but an artificially contrived earthly sys-

tem, having certain parts and functions, arranged upon an arbitrary plan, and founded for its own sake, or at best, for the purpose of gloryfying God through its beauty and perfection as a system. Those who hold to this view glory in their Church as a visible institution, having, as they believe, exclusive Divine authority for every article in their system of Church government, and for each particular feature in their forms of worship, and for every clause in their Church's Creed. They contend for the Church as an outward organization. It must stand forth as a sacred structure, whatever becomes of those who refuse to bow down and worship. Its appointments must move along from age to age in stately and monotonous procession, even though they should crush the erring and the helpless beneath their sacred tread.

But the Church was not instituted for its own glory, or for its own sake in any sense. The Church was made for man, as everything else pertaining to this earth was. The earth itself was made for man. The garden of Eden was planted for man. "The Sabbath was made for man." The ark was built for man. The Jewish Church was established

for man. The Bible was written for man. Jesus Christ was given up to death for man. The Church of modern times must be for man, for his salvation and sanctification, that by it he may be built up into perfect manhood unto the glory of God. There is nothing on this earth that has not been made for man, save man himself; he has been made for God; his chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever, and all the appointments of this earth and all the agencies of the Church are designed to enable man to fulfil this grand end. It is not the salvation of the Church as an earthly institution that is to be man's chief concern, but the salvation of men by the Church. For in reality it is only by saving men that the Church can be saved. The Church of the living God is not a thing of rules and by-laws, and other outward regulations. It is a spiritual house. The stones which compose it are lively stones, the redeemed from among men. It is not the fold that constitutes the Church; it is the flock. And it matters comparatively little what the structure of the fold be, if only it is such as to provide for the proper shelter and nourishment of the sheep. If the sheep be adequately cared for,

the walls of the fold may be of rough stones, gathered from nature's fields; or they may be of hewn stone cut out of the mountain, and polished after the similitude of a palace. And there may be many compartments in the fold, one constructed on one plan, another on another; or there may be many folds, and the architecture of no two of them precisely alike. It is the flock that is to be "one," not the fold.*

Not only may there be great diversity in the structure and appointments of the folds, but there must be. This is a necessity arising both from the nature of man and the nature of the work the Church has to do. The Church's work is twofold—gathering the truth for mankind, and gathering mankind to the truth; and each of these undertakings calls for many workers, and for the greatest diversity among the workers and their methods. There is an important sense in which the Church need not pray for unity of sentiment and opinion as

*The proper translation of John, tenth chapter, sixteenth verse, is,—“And other sheep I have which are not of this fold (αὐλῆς, aulēs); them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; And there shall be one flock (ποιμνῇ, poimnē) and one shepherd.”

yet. The world is not ready for it. There will be unity in heaven where all have learned to think and act in accordance with truth. But that condition has not yet been reached by any on this earth. Men are only seeking and gathering the truth; and it is to be gathered particle by particle, here a little and there a little; one portion by a man of one temperament, another portion by a man of an opposite temperament; one fact by a man in one position, another fact by a man in a different position. It is by the comparison of views the whole truth is reached. It is not always desirable that the members of a religious assembly be all of one mind in the intellectual sense. It might indicate that there was only one opinion among them all, and probably that opinion wrong. "He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him."¹ He that is first in any cause may seem to be right, but his neighbour may come and show him wherein he is wrong; and even that neighbour may not be wholly right, another coming in may search him—and it will be by a process of diligently searching and sifting of ideas that an approximation to the truth will finally be gained

This is true of the efforts that are made to understand the meaning of the words of revelation. To say nothing of varying degrees of literary attainment,—personal experience is often the best interpreter of Scripture ; and the interpretation of a book so varied in its contents as the Bible, calls for all the diversity that is to be found among human beings living under all manner of circumstances, and in all parts of the world. Not until the Orientals to whose ancestors the Word was given, have been converted to God, and have brought to the interpretation of Scripture their personal acquaintance with Oriental habits and modes of thought, and not until the people of all parts of the globe, for whose use the Word of Inspiration has been given, come together to compare their views of Scripture truth, need any man hope to “be able to comprehend *with all Saints*, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height,”¹ of its meaning. Many mistakes must be made meanwhile. But it is more to be thankful for mistakes. Men “rise on stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things ;” and quite as often do they rise on stepping-stones of their dead neighbours to higher things. Where

would the civilization of to-day have been but for the experiments of the past, which proved failures ? The world praises the men who succeed. Let the Church honour the memory of those who tried and failed. We owe a debt of gratitude to the men who were sincerely, and honestly, and earnestly on the wrong track as they fought the battle of life in the search for truth. "When can their glory fade ?" —even though the charge they made was wild !

And if diversity is thus needed in the gathering of the truth for mankind, it is quite as manifestly requisite in order to the successful gathering of mankind to the truth. Paul can reach a class whom Apollos cannot reach, and Apollos can reach a class whom Paul cannot reach. And what is true of men is equally true of methods. It is unwise then to rail against the existence of sects and systems. "For the body is not one member, but many."¹ "And if they were all one member, where were the body ?"² Let the spirit of brotherly kindness prevail ; let systems be regarded not as an end, but simply as means to be used in seeking the one great end, and while men hold firmly to their personal convictions, let them cease to regard *their*

peculiar convictions as so divinely inspired, that they cannot be kept in abeyance while they work together with others for the attainment of this common end,—and diversity will be found an help, not a hindrance. Let a different course be pursued ; let every man say of the system of every other—"I have no need of thee ;" let each individual thus set to work to build a tabernacle for his own opinion, as if it were the only opinion that had the inspiration of the Almighty within it ; and even then, let men have more regard for the structure of the tabernacle than for either the comfort of its occupant, or for any other purpose it is designed to serve,—and it will be long before the Church will be able to reproduce to the world, that delightful kind of primitive religion, which found men walking with God and worshipping Him everywhere, without the aid of any tabernacle.

It is most gratifying to observe that we have come upon an era in the world's history, in which sectarian jealousies are beginning to disappear. As the Church is awaking to a sense of her true mission, and is going out over the whole earth in search of perishing men, she is beginning to forget herself—her per-

sonal appearance, her carriage, her dress—and is coming to think mainly about how best to do her work. Representatives of all Churches who hold Christ as the Head, take counsel together concerning the translating and interpreting of Scripture, and the building up of the Kingdom of their common Master; and from Sabbath to Sabbath their children study the Word of God in concert. Christian Churches of every name have begun to strive together in prayer to God for the conversion of the world. Ecclesiastical bodies are beginning to look narrowly into the history and creeds of other ecclesiastical bodies, not for the purpose of detecting heresy, nor for the sake of ascertaining more accurately the nature and magnitude of existing differences, with a view to a more rigid adjustment of boundary lines; but in the hope of discovering new features of resemblance, and new traces of hereditary affinity, by which they shall be able to declare that they all belong to one family; and in some instances the circle has grown so large under this process of investigation, that when the family reunion takes place, it must be held in one of the world's great centres, every nation under heaven being represented in the happy gathering.

And througout the Mission field and at home, in the great city and the little village, different denominations are beginning to consider, not how each community shall have every sect represented in it, but how they shall so divide the territory as to economize both men and means, and still have Christ and His cause faithfully represented. Do we not hear in this the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, which shall soon prove itself the harbinger of a still better and brighter day ?

And now what place should sects and systems occupy in our esteem ? A very high place. Under existing circumstances they are a necessity ; and if only less importance shall be attached to the outward form of ecclesiastical organizations, and more to the rearing of the inner spiritual temple of which they are but the scaffolding, those organizations will prove in future a still greater blessing to the world than in the past.

When Peter and his companions were concerning themselves about the building of tabernacles, there came a cloud and overshadowed them, hiding out of view the glorified ones before them—Moses, the representative of the law ; Elias, the

representative of true piety and heart devotion; and Jesus, the representative of salvation. If men are now giving undue attention to the outward organization, we may expect that the cloud is already over them, and that in the midst of it they are losing sight of the importance of keeping the moral law, losing sight of the importance of having genuine piety in the heart, and losing sight of Jesus through whom alone they can be saved.

From the midst of the cloud a voice was heard saying, "This is my beloved Son, *hear him.*" And when the cloud had passed they saw no man save Jesus only. Moses, the representative of the complicated ritual was gone; Elias, who had been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, because the children of Israel had thrown down the altars, and had slain the prophets with the sword, and he alone was left,—even he, with all his righteous zeal for altars and ministries, was gone, and Jesus alone remained. So will it yet be with the world. "The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father."¹ Men will yet cease contending with unwise zeal for their respective ecclesiastical systems, and will

worship in spirit and in truth. They will cease to attach undue importance to their own opinions and utterances and will listen to Christ alone.

Meanwhile it is the privilege of every man to love his church with true devotion. "Bless ye God in the congregations; even the Lord from the fountain of Israel. There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the Princes of Judah and their council, the Princes of Zebulun, and the Princes of Naphtali."¹ And in all the tribes from little Benjamin to mighty Judah, there are princes, and praying Hannahs, and devout Simeons, and seven thousand saints of humble name, who delight to walk with God, and who reverently bow before Him in His temple, so that every tribe is dear to Him.

No man may account his Church as having an exclusive claim upon the presence of the Lord. It is not the palace of the King. It is only a little lodge in the wilderness, to be superseded by something grander and more enduring. Yet it is justly dear to the man who calls it his. His fathers built it as they could, and sheltering them and sheltering him, it is his spiritual home. Dearer to him than

all because Jesus has often made it His home. It has not been the tabernacle on the mountain top, visited by Him only on great occasions, it has been the cottage by the wayside, into which He has come at all hours of the day, and even in the darkness of the night. Men will yet pray that God may come down, and by His presence and power fill all churches of every name, and make them true homes; homes full of peace and brotherly love; homes planted together in true neighbourly kindness; homes constituting one city, the city of God, the New Jerusalem let down from God out of heaven. And they shall change the language of prophecy to that of present history, and cry, "Behold! the tabernacle of God is with men, and He dwelleth with them, and they are His people, and God Himself is with them and is their God."

When that day shall come, however many folds there may be, there will be but one flock, even as now there is but one Shepherd.



CHAPTER XII.

RELIGION AND THE STATE.



CHAPTER XII.

RELIGION AND THE STATE.

THE relation between Religion and the State is an old subject. It occupies about one-half of the Bible, the half extending from Exodus to Malachi, with the exception of the poetical books, and even in them and throughout the New Testament the question is not overlooked. In every century of modern times, certain phases of the subject have been earnestly discussed, and in no country has the relation which should exist between religion and the civil government been so accurately defined as to put the question for ever at rest. As general intelligence becomes more widely diffused however, the question is discussed on broader grounds, and in a less dogmatic and sectarian spirit. The contention has for the most part ceased to be, whether

shall the State control the Church, or the Church control the State? It is ceasing to be which sect shall the State recognise, and which religious denominations shall it ignore? The question is coming to be one as to the State's relation, not to any particular form of worship, but to the Bible, the common storehouse from which our religion, in all its varying forms, professes to draw its life. And in this we discover a great advance; we see evidence of the prospect of a return to the Scriptural idea of the relation between religion and the State.

By referring to those early Scripture times from which we receive the fundamental elements of all good government, we find that, in the ideal State, religion must be inwoven with the whole texture of national life. From the all-pervading nature of primitive religion, it was impossible to keep it separate from the State. The thought of man's relationship to God had a reality about it in those early times, which it has not in our day. In the house or by the way, in society or in solitude, sleeping or waking, working or worshipping, in war or in peace, the thought of accountability to God, and of being under his care, was always at hand. If men

dreamed, their dreams were devout; if they went out to battle against their enemies, they fought in the name of the Lord. With this impression of relationship to God, it would have been impossible, in organizing a nation, to leave out the idea of God and appointments whereby He might be publicly acknowledged. Accordingly, when the Hebrew commonwealth was founded, it was a Church and State in one; and throughout the whole history of the Jewish people as an independent nation, even though, through contact with heathen nations, they lost the true idea of religion and worship, this blending of civil and religious life continued; and it ceased when the religion of Christ was introduced, not because of any Divine enactment requiring it to cease, but from the force of circumstances. The religion of Christ was rejected by the nation to whom it was offered. Had the Jews accepted the risen Christ as their King, not in the vain sense in which they expected the Messiah to reign over them, but in the spiritual sense, religion and civil government might still have been harmoniously blended. But since the religion of Jesus Christ was rejected by the only nation that could be expected,

from its previous training, to receive it, it was compelled to begin with individuals gathered from different nations. It was not in the power of those early Christians to found a separate nationality; and even had they been permitted to do so, the world was not then prepared for the successful blending of religion and religious observances with civil government. Nor would it have been in accordance with the Divine plan, as revealed in Scripture, to have attempted the founding of a separate nation to be known as God's nation. Jesus came to reveal the truth that God loves the world; that his regards are not limited to a favoured few, but that "He will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."¹ The Redeemer of mankind did not seek to be king of only one nation. He does not ask to be proclaimed the head of only one nation even now. He does not teach us to account him the head of only one visible organization of any kind. He has never called Himself the head of only one branch of His Church on the earth. The Church of which Christ is the Head is a body whose members are gathered from among all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues.

There are indications in Scripture that Jesus will not come to reign in any country, even in the sense of the successful blending of religious observances with civil enactments, until his gospel has been preached among all nations. When He who undertook the redemption of the world shall take to Himself His great power, and shall reign by having His will fully done on earth, and His name stamped upon all departments of civil government, He will be satisfied with nothing less than the whole human family for His subjects. "His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." ¹ When that day shall dawn, religion and civil government will be harmoniously blended.

Toward this universal sway the religion of Jesus has looked from the beginning, and all the directions given with reference to the spreading of the gospel, have had this end constantly in view. Jesus sent forth His truth to act as leaven among men, and taught His disciples that in whatever station in life they might be called upon to serve, they must carry the spirit of His religion with them; and that this must go on until the whole shall be leavened. When the whole mass of society in any country shall have

thus been leavened, all the appointments of civil government will naturally be ordered in harmony with the spirit of Christ's religion, because ordered by those in whose hearts the spirit of Christ is. Toward this ideal it is the duty of every nation to be tending.

By what means shall the nation as a nation be made to move onward toward the realization of this ideal? And what shall be the present relation between religion and the state?

There are some who contend that whatever progress the state makes in a religious direction, must be the result of influences which are brought to bear upon the citizens through the channels of the household and the church, and by no effort whatever on the part of the civil power. Within recent years a book has been published bearing the title "Religion and the State,"¹ and written by a Christian minister occupying a position of considerable prominence. In that volume, originally published in the columns of a religious journal,² it is contended that the state, as a state, should be entirely secular; that, in theory, and as far as possible in practice, it should, in all its appointments, ignore the idea of the

existence of a God and a future life ;—not that it should wage any warfare against those ideas, but that in all its administration it should treat its citizens as if no such ideas existed. The bible must not be read in schools supported by the state ; the recognising of the first day of the week as the one day of rest in seven must be regarded as an accident ; any other day might as well have been chosen, but the first was found the most convenient ; and all Sabbath legislation must proceed upon this theory ; religious assemblies must be protected from disturbance, not because they are religious, but because they are gatherings of people for a harmless purpose ; Thanksgiving and Fast day proclamations must be regarded as emanating from national rulers as private individuals, and not in their capacity as representatives of the nation ; blasphemy and other forms of profanity must be punished not as having any reference to a Supreme Being, but because these things are offensive to many, and when carried to an extreme are of the nature of a disturbance of the public peace ; the appointment of army and navy chaplains, and of chaplains in prisons and such like places, should be

either wholly abandoned, or tolerated only as the one exception proving the general rule. In short, to use the author's own words,—“The State is no more Christian than it is Jewish or Mohammedan. It is simply a political body, and as such it has no religion to teach or sustain or compel the people to sustain,”¹ and the kind of education for the state is, “a secular education and that only—an education that would be needful and useful in this life, if there were no God and no future for the human soul.”

How utterly at variance all this is, with the idea we have found running throughout the whole of Scripture, that religion was at the first—and must be again—all-pervading!

The author of the work now under review has made one fundamental mistake, which has betrayed him into all manner of false conclusions—the simple mistake of failing to observe that the word religion has two meanings, a broad Bible meaning, and a narrow ecclesiastical sense. In the narrow sense, religion consists in creeds, confessions, forms of worship, ecclesiastical appointments in general; and against associating this kind of religion with the State, very weighty arguments can be adduced.

In the broad scriptural sense, religion is the cherishing of a proper sense of relationship to God, and to one another, and acting in our daily lives accordingly; and any argument that will dissever this kind of religion from the State, will at the same time take away the fundamental principles of all good government, and sap the whole life of the nation. "History teaches us that all great and fruitful periods have been periods in which religion has flourished, and that a declension of religion always entailed the decline of a nation. It is as though the supply of vital power were cut off from the forms of earthly life, when the dew of heaven and the warmth and light of the sun are withdrawn from them with religion. We have the most instructive example of this fact in the Israelitish nation and its history in the Old Testament. . . . And the history of Germany also furnishes the most indubitable proof of this principle." ¹ Shall a nation, in our enlightened times, with all the history of the past as its teacher, utterly neglect and ignore that which is the very essence of its life?

For the maintenance and furthering of its religious well-being—its best well-being—every nation,

having its laws based upon the Divine code, must give its authoritative sanction to the ordinance of marriage, to the sacredness of the family relation, to the observance of the Sabbath, to public and private worship, and to the public and private reading of the Scriptures ; and must give the fullest liberty to its citizens to avail themselves of one and all of these privileges, and shall protect them in the exercise of the same, so long as their mode of observing them is not such as to do violence to any of the laws of the realm. Every State thus constituted should prohibit idolatry, profanity, Sabbath desecration, disobedience to parents, murder, adultery, theft, false witness, and other open sins which come under the Divine code, and are injurious to the best welfare of the nation. The State should also require, under certain circumstances, the reading of the Book upon whose broad principles all the laws of the State are based. The State should surely ask its citizens to read the Book by which it intends to ask them to swear. The Bible should have a place in the common school before it finds a place in the court of justice.

But it is objected that the reading of the Bible

under sanction of the State is virtually to establish an unsafe connection between Church and State, and thus pave the way for religious intolerance and sectarian jealousies. To entertain such an opinion, is to mistake the character of the Bible. The Bible is not a religious book in the sectarian sense. It is not an ecclesiastical book. It lays down no system of Church government, departure from which shall be accounted heresy. It contains no elaborately formulated creed to which it asks the world to subscribe. Nor is the Bible a book of speculative philosophies concerning a future life. It is the most practical and catholic of all books without exception. In the main its contents refer to matters of every day importance, and of universal interest. It has been given as a guide to a future life, it is true, but it has been given also as a guide through the present life; and as it regards man's future destiny as determined here, it speaks far more of the here than the hereafter. It says, Take care of the present and the future will take care of itself. "Behold now is the accepted time! Behold now is the day of salvation!"¹ The Bible teaches that unswerving allegiance to God is the basis of all right-living,

and it emphasizes the infinite importance of faith in Jesus Christ; but it never teaches anything that requires a man to be either a disloyal subject, or an uncharitable and troublesome fellow-citizen. It demands neither that men shall overthrow any existing Church, nor establish any new hierarchy. It calls for neither the pulling down of existing forms of civil government, nor the building up of some new form. It is always on man's side in the sense of providing for his true happiness and best well-being even here. It is the most liberal of all books. There is only one thing it is utterly intolerant of—sin, wrongdoing in every form, whether with the heart or with the hand; and in this it studies the comfort and happiness both of the individual and the nation. It is a book of great general principles, so broad and true that an empire, covering the whole world, and embracing all its inhabitants, might be built upon its teaching. The particular precepts it utters, as universally binding, are just such as are needed to give efficacy to the wisest human legislation. Then the Bible compels nothing. It teaches and enjoins the right, but leaves the conscience free to choose or reject; it positively forbids the use of coercive

measures in the inculcation of its doctrines. To say that for the State to sanction the reading of such a book, were to establish such a connection between religion and the State as to pave the way for religious intolerance and sectarian jealousies, is a mistake. With far better reason might it be said, that to require the reading of such a Book, were to give the death-blow to sectional bigotry, religious intolerance, and tyranny in every form.

Is it said that this may be true in theory, but that in practice it is otherwise; that the testimony of history proves that the Bible is really a sectarian book, as may be seen from the great number of sects that come to it for authority? But the great number of sects that come to the Bible for support, or that profess to have their origin in its teachings, proves, on the contrary, that the Bible is not a sectarian book. Those sects have not their origin in the Bible, but in human nature. Sects and sectaries exist in all countries—countries in which the Bible is not, as well as countries in which it is; and the testimony of history uniformly declares, that in proportion as the plain teaching of the Bible is understood and accepted, sectarian jealousies and ani-

mosities disappear. One of the most gratifying facts history has ever emblazoned before the eyes of the world is, that it is to the open Bible in the hands of the people, the world is indebted for those civil and religious liberties, which have made our Protestant civilization superior to the civilization of all other countries, and of all past times.

But do nations base their laws upon the Divine Code? Some nations do. The Common Law of England is based, not only upon the Moral Law, but upon the distinctive principles of the Christian religion. Every country in which the Common Law of England is adopted, is entitled to be called a Christian country. In this sense, the Empire of Great Britain—including her colonies—is a Christian empire; and the American Republic is a Christian commonwealth. The genius of the governments of these countries, is such as to forbid their running counter to the Christian religion, in any of their enactments. Government can forbid nothing that Christianity enjoins, and can enjoin nothing that Christianity forbids. And this self-imposed limitation of the government, applies to no other religion save that of the Bible. The govern

ments of these countries may forbid certain things which Buddhism, or any other heathen religion, enjoins, or enjoin certain things which these religions forbid. If Brahmanism forbids caring for the sick and dying, the British Government must enjoin these things all the same; or if Brahmanism enjoins the murder of infants, and the burning of widows, the British Government must forbid these things all the same.

“But some citizens have conscientious scruples against reading the Bible, and rights of conscience are sacred and must be respected.” There is force in this objection. In her methods of asking her citizens to read the Bible, the State must not violate rights of conscience. Yet undue importance must not be attached to this argument. A distinction must be made between a man’s conscience, and his superstitions, and other prejudices. Had nations been restrained from educating, out of regard for everything bearing the name of conscience, the world might have been in the midnight of the dark ages yet. It is not long since the consciences of many were shocked by the teaching of the doctrine that the earth goes round the sun. And even in en-

lightened countries, there are still good men whose consciences are offended by the teaching of the revelations of the science of geology, in regard to the length of the six days of creation. There are correct scientific theories taught in many State endowed schools, which are far more repugnant to the consciences of some who are taxed for the support of those schools, than anything taught in the Bible could be. But shall the State not sanction the teaching of science, on this account? Shall it be argued, that it is unfair to tax those citizens for the support of a school in which something is taught which they conscientiously dislike? Shall not the State rather say, we have faith in education, we believe it is a good thing, we must give it our authoritative sanction, in the conviction that as it becomes more generally diffused, it will enlighten men's consciences and banish their prejudices?

History has taught us that the light of the Bible is—to say the least—as truly a good thing as scientific knowledge; and that all that is needed is, that the world receive more of it, in order that its teaching may become welcome to all. And in this we see an urgent reason also, why those who enjoy the Bible's

light should seek by all proper means in their power, through the channels of the home and the Church, and daily personal example, as well as through the school, to commend the pure light of Scripture truth to all that are about them.

“ But suppose that in a given country those enjoying the light of the Bible were in the minority ; and that infidels, or atheists, or heathen were in the majority, and should insist upon having the writings of Paine or Mohammed or Confucius read under State sanction and support, would the minority not feel this to be a hardship ? And does not this show how unsound the principle is ? ” We hope that, so far as any nation now nominally Christian is concerned, this will be for ever an impossibility. We trust that mankind have at length begun their final onward march, and that Christian nations are leading the van, and need not think for a moment of ever retreating. We believe that the leaders of the progress of the age, may cut the bridges behind them as they go, not allowing so much as one to remain even for the sake of argument. We have too much faith in what Scripture truth and general knowledge, widely diffused, and sealed by the breath of the pro-

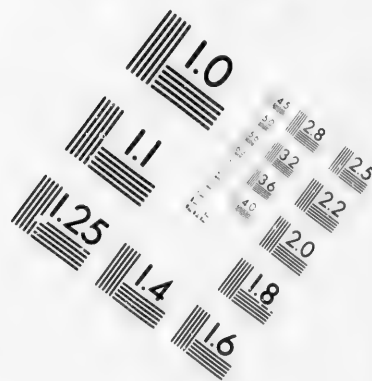
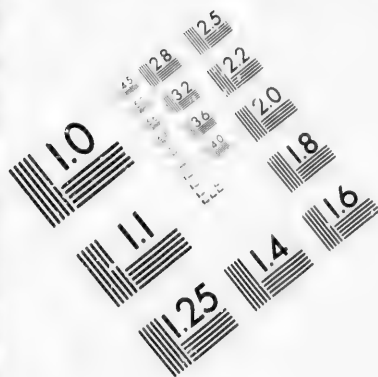
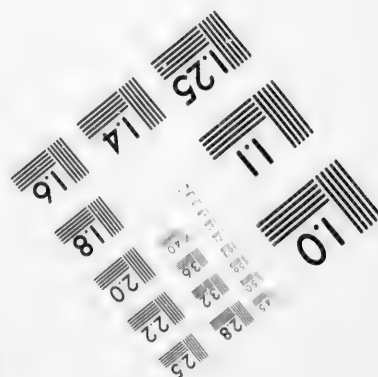
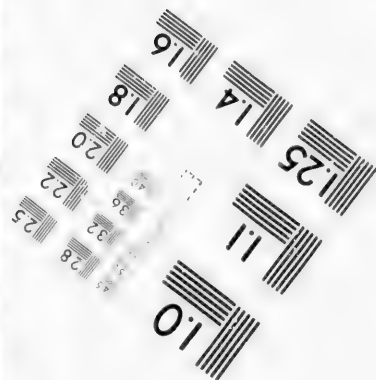
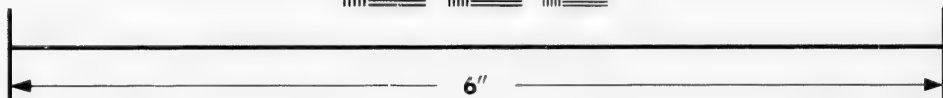
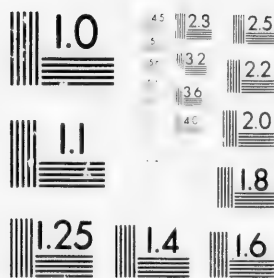


IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)



Photographic
Sciences
Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N. Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

44 28 25
32 22
36 20
18

10

mised Spirit, will do for mankind, to entertain the supposition that any of the Christian nations of the earth will ever again be given over to the heathen. But were such a state of things as has been supposed actually in existence—were Paine's *Age of Reason* the book upon whose principles the law of the land was based, and were that book publicly read under sanction and support of the government, much to the offence of the Scripture-loving minority—then the chief thing for that minority to do would be, not to argue the question on any hypothetical basis, nor on purely religious grounds, but to make a direct attack upon the book, and show it to be, both in itself and through the effects of its use in the State, an evil so great as to demand removal. And now, seeing that the Bible has the right of possession, in certain countries, and that its worth has been emphatically endorsed, by its principles being made the basis of the common law, the only honest way for any to attempt to have the Bible torn from its place among the institutions of these countries, and flung aside, is, by attacking the book itself, and showing that its use is a hindrance, and not a help, to the good government and highest advancement of the nation. The

arguing of the question on purely hypothetical grounds is unfair. The Bible has a right to use the language of its Lord and say, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?"¹

"But which Bible shall be used? The version in general use among Protestants or the Douay version of the Church of Rome?" If, in any country, the former of these versions has the right of possession, and if there are those who wish to have it set aside, and the Douay version take its place, they must make it appear that the Douay version is a better version, and so much better as to warrant the change. If they wish to have it introduced on the ground of its being the Bible of a particular Church, their claim must at once be dismissed.

In the light of the whole teaching, both of Scripture and of the history of modern times, we judge it to be in harmony with the spirit of Scriptural religion, and with the genius of the governments of Christian countries, that these governments should sanction the reading of the Bible in public schools, so long as they do no violence to the conscientious convictions of those thus asked to read.

But a last reason commonly urged against this use of the Bible is, that the thing is impracticable, the Bible cannot be read properly ; " if it should be read at all, it should be expounded and read thoroughly, and ordinary teachers are not competent to do this, nor could any teacher do it without inculcating his peculiar religious views." But a similar objection might be brought against the teaching of many things that are taught in public schools. No teacher is competent to teach all that is to be known upon any subject. And it is not always expedient to teach even all that might be taught. But this is no reason why a knowledge of the rudiments of those branches may not be imparted ; nor does it furnish any valid argument against the reading of the simple text of Scripture. It is a gratifying fact that it is not necessary to systematize and expound the doctrines of the Bible, before they can exert a proper influence upon the life and character ; and equally gratifying to observe, that the portions of Scripture which are specially valuable in order to the best citizenship, are so plain that a child can understand them. But the argument implied in this last statement is offensive to some who oppose our

view of this question. To speak of having the Bible read for the purpose of making good citizens is, in their view, to treat the book irreverently. We, on the contrary, see irreverence, not in this, but in their earnest effort to have the Bible utterly banished from its proper and rightful place in the heart and life of the nation.

Any argument by which men seek to banish the Bible from State use, is an argument which proves too much. If followed to its legitimate conclusion, it would become at no great distance, a revolutionary measure, and aim at unchristianizing every Christian nation. Let men banish the Bible from State sanction and use, on the ground of its being a religious book, and they are upon the line of argument which leads directly to the annulling of all Sabbath legislation, and finally to the excluding of all church members from holding office under the government. There is only a short logical step between the first of these three changes, and the last. We have no fear that the last will be reached, but we would feel more secure if it were made manifest that the first cannot be taken. It is being taken—practically it has been taken in some quarters. This

is a time for watchfulness. In every Christian country where the people of any community have authority from the government to demand that the Bible be read in their school, much will depend upon the promptness with which this privilege is exercised. Let the matter go by default,—let the Bible quietly cease to be used under sanction of the State—and soon the idea that the State should utterly ignore the Bible, will have the right of possession, and a coming generation will find it a hard idea to dislodge. Yet it will be dislodged. For coming generations will, we trust, be wiser and better than we, and will reverse some of the customs we have allowed to become fashionable. We love to glory in the advancement of the century in which we live. We help to swell “that most wearisome chorus of self-laudation which is evermore rising up about this most wonderful and enlightened age.” The present is an age of enlightenment and progress. Yet in its impulsive haste in one direction, and its apathetic indifference in another, it is capable of committing fearful blunders; so much so indeed, that we are often comforted only by the thought, that we are not the people with whom wisdom shall die, but

that a more enlightened and a wiser race shall come after us, to rectify our errors and profit by our failures, while they build upon the old foundation, upon which we and our fathers have been building, and carry still further toward the realization of the scripture ideal, that Heaven-designed structure,—social, civil and religious—upon which they and we and our fathers alike, must be regarded as only humble labourers by the day.

But it is for the present generation now to see that it follows out the original God-given design, and in all respects does its work faithfully and well. It cannot do this, if it idly sleeps while the sun of its progress is going backward in the heavens, by the Bible ceasing to be used in the common school.



CHAPTER XIII.

DO WE NEED ANOTHER REFORMATION?



CHAPTER XIII.

DO WE NEED ANOTHER REFORMATION?

ALL human designs and inventions are at first defective, and must be improved from time to time if ever they are to become perfect. Only Divine things are perfect from the beginning. No improvement could be made upon the machinery by which the earth is lighted, and heated, and watered, and sent circling round the sun. Even when God's works are in their embryo state, they are perfectly adapted to the purpose they are designed to serve at that stage of their existence. There are systems of religion and worship in the world, which are manifestly human, being defective at their very origin. Some contrivances, man has power to improve; but where spiritual changes are to be made, this power is gone. And hence the religion which

is at first imperfect, becomes only more and more so as man works changes upon it. Even divine things fare ill at man's hands. The *religion* God introduced into the world was perfect at the first. But as man has handled that religion, and sought to make it his, it has been marred by his touch. Eighteen hundred years ago, there was a purer religion on the earth than there is to-day. And in Old Testament times, we find religion the more divine the farther back we go. Not to the age of the prophets, or kings, or lawgivers, but back to the days of faithful Abraham and godly Enoch—nay, to the innocency of Eden must we look, if we would see man living as he should.

The tendency to deteriorate is observable in all departments of human life. Let the society of any country or age be organized upon the truest principles, and started on its journey down the centuries with the fairest prospects, and it will not be long until it will need a thorough purification and re-adjustment. It will collect dust upon its white raiment, and earth upon its chariot wheels, and will gather to itself so much dross, and filth, and useless luggage, that its movements will become fitful and

unstable, and unless attended to, it will perish by the way, crushed by its very weakness and beneath that with which it hath cumbered itself.

One of the peculiar features of the gradual spoiling of society is, that the society itself is not aware at the time, that it is being spoiled. It is too close to itself to see itself. Gray hairs are here and there upon it, yet it knoweth it not. The manners and customs of a people may become foolish and ludicrous in the extreme, and yet the change take place so gradually that no one will see either the foolish or the ludicrous feature of a single fashion; all will move along as gravely as if living in accordance with sound reason, and not in the midst of the vainest show. So also may the religion and worship of a people degenerate into the heartless observance of empty formalities, and yet that people never once suspect that their religion is not as pure as it was from the beginning. Men can have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, and hearts that do not understand.

But in the merciful providence of Him who never leaves Himself without witness, there is provision made for counteracting this tendency. "God of His

wisdom raises up men of religious genius, heaven-sent prophets; born fully armed and fitted for their fearful work. They have an eye to see through the reverend hulls of falsity; to detect the truth a long way off. They send their eagle gaze far down into the heart; far on into the future, thinking for ages not yet born. The word comes from God with blessed radiance upon their mind. They must speak the tidings from on high, and shed its beamy light on men around, till the heavy lids are opened and the sleepy eye beholds."¹ In Old Testament times such men were called *Seers*, in modern times they have been called Reformers; the new name is good, but "the old is better." In whatever age they live, they are men who see what others do not see. The *Seer* is the exception to the general rule among men. In spite of the disadvantage of having been born, like those around him, into the midst of scenes whose early and sacred associations tend to make him blind to their real nature, he has power given him to keep his eyes open and his judgment clear. Where others see foolishness as if it were sense, he sees it to be foolishness. Where others see form and emptiness as if it were sober reality, he sees it to be form and

emptiness. It has been said of John Knox that "with a singular instinct he held to the truth and fact; the truth alone was there for him, the rest a mere shadow and deceptive nonentity."¹ It is related that "while Knox and some of his companions were galley slaves on the river Loire, some officer or priest one day presented them an image of the *Virgin Mother*, requiring that they, the blasphemous heretics, should do it reverence. 'Mother! Mother of God?' said Knox when the turn came to him; 'this is no mother of God; this is a piece of wood, I tell you, with paint on it. She is fitter for swimming, I think, than for being worshipped,' added Knox, and flung the thing into the river."² It may be thought that it required no great power of penetration to see the sham in this case, that Knox would have been blind had he not seen it; but there are painted shams in the world now, the folly of which should be seen quite as clearly, and yet intelligent men cling to them and revere them as if they were the most substantial of realities.

To detect and expose the falseness that may have gathered about the religion of one's day, requires

more than penetration, it demands extraordinary courage. No better illustration of this is needed than is to be found in the life of the great German Reformer. In Luther's day, the German people believed as firmly in many of the degrading superstitions, which had found their way into their religious system, as we believe in our ordinary religious appointments. And in addition to this, the Church and State were so allied in Germany, that it was dangerous for a man to breathe a word against any existing religious custom or observance. To speak lightly of anything that had the stamp of religion upon it, was to speak evil of dignities; it was to deride things dear to the consciences of all men; it was to turn one's back upon one's own early training, and ridicule things one had been solemnly taught to venerate. It was to revolutionize one's very conscience. This calls for courage such as is seldom demanded. It is easy to go forward to face physical danger, fighting in a cause of which the whole community approves. A man can march right onward then, knowing that the worst the enemy can do is to kill the body. But when, for the love of Christ, a man takes issue with his best

friends, and despises the opinions of the whole world, and tells his own conscience that it has been mistaken—asking him to believe in things that are false ; when to go forward is not only to go alone, but to go making rude war upon what men call *sacred things*, tearing them down, not knowing what structure shall be reared in their stead ; to go when the enemy seems to have power to kill the soul—this is what demands courage worthy of the name. “ You shall find men thick as acorns in autumn, who will wade neck-deep in blood, and charge up to the cannon’s mouth when it rains shot as snow-flakes at Christmas. Such men may be had for red coats, and dollars, and ‘ fame.’ It requires only vulgar bravery for that, and men who are ‘ food for powder.’ But to oppose the institution which your fathers loved in centuries gone by ; to sweep off the altars, forms and usages that ministered to your mother’s piety, helped her bear the bitter ills and cross of life, and gave her winged tranquillity in the hour of death ; to sunder your ties of social sympathy ; destroy the rites associated with the aspiring dream of childhood, and its earliest prayer, and the sunny days of youth—to disturb these because they

weave chains, invisible but despotic, which bind the arm, and fetter the foot, and confine the heart; to hew down the hoary tree under whose shadow the nations played their game of life, and found in death the clod of the valley sweet to their weary bosom—to destroy all this because it poisons the air and stifles the breath of the world—it is a sad and a bitter thing; it makes the heart throb, and the face that is hard as iron all over in public, weeps in private weak woman's tears it may be. Such trials are not for vulgar souls; they feel not the riddle of the world.”¹

This is what it was to be a religious reformer in Martin Luther's day. And a single incident from the life of Luther will serve to illustrate what working a religious reformation means. We choose the incident of Luther's appearance at the Diet of Worms, an incident which the author of *Heroes and Hero-worship*, in his description of it, has called “the greatest scene in modern European history, the point indeed from which the whole subsequent history of civilization takes its rise. . . . After multiplied negotiations, disputations, it had come to this. The young Emperor, Charles V., with all the Princes of

Germany, Papal Nuncios, dignitaries, spiritual and temporal, are assembled there. Luther is to appear and answer for himself, whether he will recant or not. The world's pomp and power sits there on this hand; on that, stands up for God's truth, one man, the poor miner Hans Luther's son. Friends had reminded him of Huss, advised him not to go; he could not be advised. A large company of friends rode out to meet him, with still more earnest warnings; he answered, 'Were there as many devils in Worms as roof-tiles, I would on.'"¹ Luther went to the Diet, and in a speech of two hours, answered for himself; and so nobly did he answer that all his adversaries were ashamed. And in answering for himself, he answered for us, and for the whole world. "That," adds Carlyle, "was the greatest moment in the modern history of men. English Puritanism, England and its Parliament, America and vast work there these two centuries. French Revolution, Europe and its work everywhere at present; the germ of it all lay there; had Luther in that moment done other, it had been otherwise! The European world was asking him; am I to sink ever lower into falsehood, stagnant putrescence, loathsome accursed

death ; or, with whatever paroxysm, to cast the falsehoods out of me and be cured and live ? ”¹

In that hour Luther became, in an important sense, a redeemer of men. He rescued a large part of the Church from the dominion of falsehood, and put into its hand again the truth, and in the name of God, bade it receive new life. He laid hold upon religion, and, stripping it of the filthy covering of earthiness that was clogging it, sent it—with the glittering car of progress linked to it—rolling down the centuries anew. But—shall we say—Only to become clogged again in course of time, by the peculiar kind of mud which belongs to the centuries through which it rolls ? And, *Have we now come upon a time when we need a new race of Reformers, and another Reformation ?*

How shall we answer this question ? How shall we see ourselves as a *Seer* would see us ? How shall we glance through and through our religion and detect all its earthiness, as the Heaven-born Prophet would ? We have this to encourage us—that ours is a religion that courts investigation ; not a religion which surrounds itself with a wall of defence against those who are disposed to search for weaknesses ; but

a religion which throws open all its gates, and bids friend and foe alike come in and search every nook and corner, and examine the very foundation on which its being rests; a religion which says: "Search the Scriptures;"¹ a religion which gives full permission to burn the chaff and keep only the wheat; to consume the wood, hay, stubble, and everything besides that will not shine all the more brightly because of the flames; a religion which bids the investigator throw aside earth and sand, and never cease his undermining work until he comes upon a solid rock which all his powers of exploration shall be unable to disturb; a religion which boldly says, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good;"² a religion whose voice to all who profess to embrace it, is—"Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves."³ If our religion is the religion of Jesus Christ, we may go forward fearlessly in the work of inspecting and assaying it, assured that the fire with which we try it may fail, but not one tittle of Christ's law shall fail. "The truth of the Lord endureth forever."⁴

How shall we successfully engage in this work to which we are challenged? The best we can do,

is to examine ourselves and our religion as faithfully as we may, in the light of the history of the past, and especially in the light of the teaching of Jesus in His treatment of the religionists of His day.

At the very outset we come upon a fundamental need for reformation. We find the same stumbling-block before us, over which the Scribes and Pharisees fell and were broken—self-righteousness. We cannot entertain the thought of questioning the correctness of our religious beliefs, or the validity of any of those opinions we have all our lives held dear. The religious views and opinions *we* have entertained are of course unquestionable. To speak of examining our religious convictions, were to betray doubt concerning a matter which is so sacred, that it must evermore be lifted above the reach of doubt; for doubt is scepticism! and scepticism is heresy! and heresy is heinous sin!

So long as a man is thus solemnly prohibited from enquiring into the correctness of his religious views, how is he ever to examine himself as to whether he is in *the* faith! If he is a Hindoo, he must remain a Hindoo, for fear of losing his soul by doubting any of the articles of what he has been taught is the

true Religion. If he is a Jew, he must remain a Jew, for fear of committing the unpardonable sin by calling in question any of the religious beliefs in which he has been trained. If he belongs to one or another of the branches of the Christian Church, he must be true to his Creed, and on no account presume to examine his "Confession," or allow anything to shake his faith in a single rite in his "rubric," or a single doctrine taught in his "formulary." Every other man should carefully examine his religion; but it would be most dangerous for *us* to think of examining to see whether *our* faith is the true faith. —If this is not self-righteousness, by what name should it be called? It is the same old Pharisaic spirit which rejected Christ, when He came asking the men of His day to turn their backs upon certain beliefs they had long held sacred.

We are taught in Scripture, that one of the first conditions necessary to the acquiring of wisdom is, that the mind be kept open to conviction; that the moment a man begins to profess that he of all men is wise, that moment he begins to be in the worst sense a fool; that it is the man of humble child-like spirit, the man that is always ready to accuse him-

self of folly, who is really in the way of acquiring true knowledge. "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise."¹ Whatever a man's religious opinions may be, and however sincerely those opinions are entertained, if the man finds sin in his heart, or the evidence of it in his outward life, he must be willing to suspect himself of hypocrisy, and say,—I must examine myself in the presence of Christ, and in the light of His Word, that I may know.

But we have come upon another demand for reformation. Who thinks of examining his heart and conduct in the light of Scripture? or of comparing his daily life with the life of the "Great Exemplar"? The Bible is not taken as "the rule of practice," whatever may be said of it as a "rule of faith." The Bible lies on the shelf, and man's conduct is ordered according to another rule. It is three hundred and fifty years since Martin Luther found the Bible in the library at Erfurt and read it, and in reading it discovered that the professing Christians of his day were not living in accordance with its plain teachings; and it was for the sake of having the Bible become the guide of men's lives, that he bravely be-

gan, and nobly fought out to the bitter end, the Reformation battle. If neglect of the Bible on the part of professing Christians be cause enough, who will say that the world is not now fully ripe for another Reformation?

Yet men have a certain reverence for the Bible. And here we come upon a third demand for reformation. The errors and abuses in our religion, date further back than either the age of Luther, or the time of the Pharisees. They are essentially the same with those that cursed the Jewish Church, in the days when the Old Testament Prophets attempted in vain the work of restoration. Did the Jews commit the blunder of regarding their sacred symbols, and other religious appointments, as of saving value in themselves? And did they accordingly deceive themselves and mock God, by the use they made of holy things? The representatives of our religion do the same. Men who would be shocked at the thought of living from year to year without a Bible in their home, will live contentedly from the beginning to the end of their whole lifetime, without ever reading the Bible once throughout. The book is sacred in their eyes in an outward and ma-

terial sense, and is of value to them as a fetich is of value to a heathen. It is expected to banish sin as a piece of cedar wood will banish moths. It is relied on for salvation, as the ark of the Covenant of the Lord was relied upon, in the disastrous fight with the Philistines.

And the same thing is true of "places of worship." If a building be modelled after a religious style of architecture, and called a *church*, and set apart to the public worship of God by certain consecrating ceremonies, the very material of which it is composed is accounted subjectively *holy*, and the church is expected to bless the man whose name is written upon the pew, even though he utterly neglects the proper use of the house of God.

The same thing is true also of the Sabbath. Forgetting that naturally, all days are alike, and that the first day of the week is holy or unholy according to the use man makes of its hours, men look upon the Sabbath as being in itself a holy portion of time, of whose saving power they will receive the full benefit, if they will simply rest, and conduct themselves with an outwardly grave demeanour, and give the day a chance to do its work.

These are the religious ideas¹ in the midst of which men are still dreaming their troubled religious dream.

Nor do we stop at this point in our imitating of the follies of the ancient Jews. They learned to associate the thought of God exclusively with their sacred places, symbols, and times, and thus contrived to blot out of their minds the idea of the omnipresence of God:—So have we. We must be devoutly circumspect while using the Bible, the Church, and the Sabbath, but at all other times we are free. And so it has come to pass, that work and worship are as widely dissevered as if God had given commandment to this effect, instead of having given a special command to the contrary. While on the one hand a voice comes from God telling us to trust in Him and bless Him “at all times,” and to give Him glory by all that we do; on the other hand a rude voice comes from among men, telling the bitter truth that “with us Religion is a nun; she sits behind her black veil in the meeting-house. All the week, nobody thinks of that joyless vestal. Meantime strong-handed cupidity, with his legion of devils, goes up and down the earth, and presses Weakness, Ignorance and Want into his service.”

But the demand for reformation does not cease with these features of resemblance to the apostate Jews. Fundamental errors have been borrowed from a much earlier time. Men have gone back to the beginning of formal worship, and looked on while the first sacred acts were being performed, but instead of reading the meaning of those acts in the light of their own day brightened by the reflected light of later revelation, they have taken a volume of mediæval theology and other traditions of the Fathers along with them, and have interpreted the worship of Cain and Abel in the light of these ; and, attributing to Cain what belonged to Abel, and to Abel what was peculiar to Cain, have reversed the teaching of the word of God. They have said that the first thing essential to true worship is, that a man have a painful sense of estrangement from God—their books of reference declaring that this was Abel's feeling,—though in the light of Scripture we find it to have been Cain's, while in Abel's heart, on the contrary, there was faith, filial confidence—the only proper feeling for any penitent child to entertain, in drawing near to the offended Father who bids it come to Him that He may forgive and bless it.

As men have gone forward in the framing of their religious opinions, still perusing their books of reference, they have next said, that acts of worship are to be performed either for the purpose of making some change upon the mind of God, by reason of which He will condescend to love and forgive us; or for the purpose of working some change upon ourselves by reason of which we shall have a just claim upon God for His forgiveness and love—ideas which may be peculiar to Cain's worship, but certainly not to Abel's; and which may be found taught in added literature, but never in the word of God.

As men have still stood in presence of the first acts of worship, with their books of reference in their hands, they have deliberately declared that the excellence of Abel's offering is to be found in its outward form. Assuming that Abel's offering was a distinctive symbol of atonement, and that Abel must have seen it to be such, and must have understood its far-reaching meaning, and that it was mainly because he did so that his offering was accepted, men have declared, that the thing essential to salvation, is, *the right understanding of the method by*

which God can save us. And their manner of studying all later revelation has been such as to strengthen and confirm this opinion. And under this conviction, the Church has, for centuries past, given itself up to the study of the plans and purposes of God, and to the framing of systems of Divinity; the pulpit has preached a metaphysical gospel, and the hearers have bent their chief energies upon the importance of believing, to the consequent neglect of the importance of living.

In this we have taken a step in advance of the Jews; they were able to see only the outward form, the actual symbol, and accordingly they bent their chief energies upon outward observances. Their worship consisted in the skilful manipulating of certain material things, and could be performed with the hands alone, even though the heart were dead. In the light of New Testament times, we are able to look beneath, and discover something of the spiritual significance which underlies all divinely ordained visible appointments; and thus we have been enabled to carry our worship up into the region of the intellect; and we have done so, and that to such an extent that our religion has

come to consist largely in the skilful manipulating of immaterial things—doctrinal statements, logical sequences—which can be attended to by the ordinary powers of the intellect, though the heart may still be dead. As the Jews abused their ritual, so have we abused our theology.

And this undue importance men have learned to attach to metaphysical forms in matters of doctrine, has intimately associated with it, the attaching of undue importance to forms in all matters. But why speak of how our several Churches of various names, magnify questions of simple expediency into questions of eternal moment?—or of the danger that in some quarters the prominence the Church is giving to the outward form, shall become the snare that shall entice men over to idolatry as in the earlier time?—or of methods of praise, postures in prayer; unseemly differences, unnecessary debates—all conducted with as intense eagerness as if Jesus had never come to bear witness to the unimportance of outward forms, and the all-importance of the inner truth; or as if the voice of Inspiration had never declared, “that we should serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”¹

"For the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life?"¹

But the demand for reformation which includes all others is, that mankind have need to be taught what true religion is,—that it does not now prevail in any country in the world; that men are mistaken when they suppose that the religion we call ours, and which is truly ours, is the religion of the Bible. We have not copied from the Bible. We have copied from our fellow-men. Men who were only awaking from the dreadful nightmare of heathen superstition, have been our models;—Men whose voices were the first to be heard as the dreary winter of Romish tyranny was passing away—blessed voices they were, yet hoarse as that of the first raven in spring, which only tells us that the time of the singing of birds is near. Yet we who come after them, and should be the birds of song, have been content to copy their notes, instead of going still farther back to learn the sweet notes of the turtle-dove of the former Spring.

Some noble examples have been left us, yet some that have not been so noble. Scared by the many ills they saw arise out of the Church's unhappy

union with the world, the fathers have taught us that the Church and the world should be kept wholly separate; that religion and worship should be kept aloof from the concerns of common life. And accordingly men tie their religion to the Sabbath, and to the Bible as a material thing, and tie the Bible to the pew-desk in the Church, that it may not be desecrated by being read in schools, or by its precepts being freely referred to as a guide in ordinary business affairs. As if the Bible were some narrow, ecclesiastical, pietistic book, and not the Book whose precepts are so broad as to include within their compass, business, education, everything; or as if the Bible's doctrine were, that religion should be a thing by itself in the world, and not an all-pervading principle and presence; or as if the Bible taught that worship is a thing to be observed only at particular times, and in particular moods, and not a thing which should be as natural to man as loving—as natural as life itself—a man's ploughing being holy as his prayers.

We do need another Reformation; yet not another man as a Reformer. We have had enough of men. We have had enough of external methods of

every kind. We cannot be redeemed by appliances that are only human and earthly. It is unsafe to ply us with these. We fall down and worship them. We place them between ourselves and God. Moses must be buried out of sight, and where no man shall know of his sepulchre. Even Jesus must not remain long on the earth, lest men take to worshipping His manhood alone. And even so, men have exalted a frail man to be His representative, and have called him "Father" contrary to the Saviour's word, and have bowed down and kissed his feet. And those who refuse this homage, are still unable to lose sight of men. They too have their Pope — one who never needs a successor, seeing he never dies, but is already dead and sainted ; yet who rules the Church, and whose word is law to the utmost corner of the world. With some his name is Luther, with others Calvin, with others Wesley, with others other Saints, who would weep even now did they know how men have deified them and taken their word as the word of God. We have had enough of men—and men have had enough of us ! However the world may treat its saints after they are gone, it treats them cruelly enough while here. " Which of the prophets have

not your fathers persecuted?"¹ "He that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey."² To lift up the voice against wrongs that are done in the name of the Lord, is to forfeit the love of the nearest of kin, and encounter the hatred of all men. Shall we ask another man to come and undertake to reform the world, but succeed in only adding to the number of opposing sects—crying the while: "Alas for me! Would God my mother had died or ever I was born to bear all the burthens of the world, and right its wrongs?" We cannot even ask Jesus back to earth as yet, much as we would love to hear His voice, and see His face, and grasp His hand, and kneel to clasp and kiss His feet. And shall we call for a Restorer who is only man? "Thus saith the Lord; cursed be the man who trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord."³ We hope "the coming man" will never come. Our next Reformer must be one whom we cannot stone, nor saw asunder, nor nail to any cross; One whom we can worship, but worship only with the heart, "in spirit and in truth." Hark! It is the Saviour's voice! "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto

you ; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." ¹ And as Jesus speaks, all the voices that have been slumbering for ages among the hoary Old Testament hills, awake and proclaim anew the coming of *the world's complete Restorer, the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the Father and the Son*. And with Him there come men ! and communities ! and nations "born in a day !" Another Man ? Another Reformer ? Another Prophet ? "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His spirit upon them !" ² When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide men into all truth, and will shew them things to come. He will take of the things of Christ, and shew them unto the world. He will reprove the world concerning the commission of sin, concerning the neglect of righteousness, and concerning the want of common sense. How long have we to wait ? O ! tell us that these are "the last days," for "it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh ; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams : And on my servants and on my handmaidens will I pour out

in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy." ¹ Would that that day were now; that the hearts of all mankind were filled with the Spirit of the Lord—that all had the mind of Christ, to think His thoughts, and do His works, and walk in sweet companionship with God, thinking of Him as Father in Heaven bending over the children of men in forgiving love; thinking of this earth as His, with man His son and steward, using it for Him; looking to Him as He appears in Jesus, "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification," and is man's living Brother still—bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, having an heart that is touched with the feeling of our infirmities—still calling down to man, "Come unto me." Let the seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed the knee to Baal, reply: "Come Thou to us. O! Spirit of Christ, come down to enlighten our minds and renew our wills, and persuade and enable all to embrace Thine own religion!" Let the great listening world take up the cry, "O, Spirit of Jesus, come!" For already His answer is written, "Surely I come quickly!" When the Spirit and the Bride do thus say "Come," and he that heareth

shall echo "Come!"—then will the Spirit of the Lord come down, to apply the purchased blessings, and to close the Redemptive work. "Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." ¹



ne
gs,
en
as

INDEX TO QUOTATIONS.



INDEX TO QUOTATIONS.

PAGE.

20. 1 Matthew xv. 9.
 21. 1 Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. I. p. 38.
 22. 1 *Chips*. Vols. I. 37, 44; II. 305, 307.
 23. 1 *Chips*, I. 16.
 " 2 " II. 300.
 25. 1 " II. 34.
 26. 1 " II. 35.
 27. 1 Revelation xxii. 18, 19.
 32. 1 Carlyle, *Heroes and Hero Worship*, Chapman and Hall's edition, p. 150; *Sartor Resartus*, 174.
 37. 1 Max Müller, *Origin and Growth of Religion*, p. 20.
 " 2 WEBSTER.
 " 3 WORCESTER.
 39. 1 Matthew xxii. 40.
 42. 1 Genesis ii. 17.
 43. 1 " iii. 4.
 " 2 " i. 28, 29.
 " 3 " ii. 15.
 44. 1 Revelation ii. 7.
 " 2 " xxi. 7.
 47. 1 Matthew vii. 9-13.
 48. 1 First Corinthians x. 31.
 53. 1 Genesis iv. 3, 4.
 54. 1 John iv. 24.
 55. 1 " xv. 1.
 " 2 " xii. 24.
 " 3 " vi. 48.
 " 4 First Corinthians, xi. 26.
 57. 1 Genesis iii. 15.
 58. 1 " i. 28.
 60. 1 " iv. 4.
 " 2 Hebrews, xi. 4.
 61. 1 " " "
 " 2 " ix. 22.
 62. 1 Acts iv. 12.
 " 2 First Timothy, ii. 5.
 " 3 Romans i. 20.

PAGE.

63. 1 First Corinthians ii. 5.
 " 2 Galatians v. 6.
 64. 1 Hebrews xi. 6.
 65. 1 Rev. Alfred Cave, *The Scriptural Doctrine of Sacrifice*, p. 41.
 " 2 Hebrews xi. 4.
 67. 1 Second Corinthians viii. 12.
 " 2 Genesis iv. 3, 4.
 68. 1 First John iii. 12.
 69. 1 Romans ix. 13.
 70. 1 Matthew xiii. 12.
 72. 1 Isaiah xli. 2, 3.
 76. 1 Zechariah xiv. 20, 21.
 79. 1 James C. Moffatt, D.D., *A Comparative History of Religions*, vol. 2, p. 69.
 80. 1 " " 68.
 84. 1 Dean Stanley, *History of the Jewish Church*, vol. I. p. 106.
 85. 1 McCosh, *Typical Forms in Creation*, p. 331.
 86. 1 Psalm, xc. 1.
 87. 1 First Kings, viii. 13, 27.
 89. 1 " " 44-49, 53.
 " 2 " " 57, 61.
 90. 1 Psalm cxxxvii. 1-6.
 " 2 " cxvii. 1-2.
 95. 1 Second Peter ii. 5.
 96. 1 Genesis vi. 1-4.
 98. 1 " xviii. 18, 19.
 " 2 " i. 22, 23.
 99. 1 Deuteronomy vi. 7.
 103. 1 First Corinthians x. 31.
 104. 1 Luke x. 27.
 105. 1 Deuteronomy vi. 6, 7.
 " 2 Genesis xxxi. 29.
 106. 1 " " 42.
 " 2 " " 43, 44.
 107. 1 " " 51-53.
 " 2 Ruth i. 8.
 " 3 " ii. 4.
 " 4 " " "

PAGE.	
107.....	5 Ruth ii. 12.
116.....	1 Jeremiah vii. 22.
".....	2 " " 24.
119.....	1 First Samuel iv. 3-11.
121.....	1 Isaiah i. 11-17.
123. 1	<i>Vishnu Purana</i> , 44.
" 2	Hardwick, <i>Christ and other Masters</i> , p. 226.
124.....	1 Psalm i. 9-14.
".....	2 Jeremiah xxxii. 35.
".....	3 First Kings xiv. 23.
127.....	1 Psalm viii. 3, 4.
".....	2 " xix. 1.
".....	3 Second Samuel xxiii. 3.
129.....	1 Malachi iii. 1-4.
133.....	1 Galatians iv. 4.
138.....	1 First John i. 29.
".....	2 Revelation v. 5.
139.....	1 Matthew xi. 28.
140.....	1 Matthew x. 34-36.
140.....	2 Luke xii. 49.
141.....	1 Genesis iii. 15.
".....	2 Psalm ii. 12.
".....	3 " xlv. 3-5.
".....	4 Malachi iii. 2.
".....	5 Matthew iii. 2.
142.....	1 " iii. 11, 12.
".....	2 " xxiii. 13.
".....	3 " " 33.
143.....	1 Revelation xix. 11-16.
145.....	1 John xii. 19.
".....	2 " vii. 46.
146.....	1 " xi. 43.
".....	2 Luke xxiii. 34.
148.....	1 Exodus xx. 8.
149.....	1 " " 12.
".....	2 " " 13.
".....	3 John xii. 21-32.
152.....	1 Matthew iii. 10.
153.....	1 John xii. 21, 32.
".....	2 Matthew xv. 14.
154.....	1 Acts x. 34-35.
".....	2 Colossians iii. 10, 11.
155.....	1 Matthew v. 17.
".....	2 Mark i. 44.
156.....	1 Psalm cxxxvii. 5, 6.
".....	2 Luke xiii. 34.
157.....	1 " xix. 41-44.
161.....	1 Isaiah xli. 28- xlii. 4.
162.....	1 Hebrews x. 5-7.
".....	2 Romans viii. 3-4.
163.....	1 First Corinthians v. 3.
".....	2 Revelation iii. 8.
".....	3 Romans iii. 20-26.
165.....	1 John xvi. 13.
166.....	1 " iv. 21-23.
174.....	1 Matthew xi. 30.
175.....	1 First Corinthians xiv. 26.
".....	2 " " 40.

PAGE.	
176.....	1 Acts ii. 38-40.
178.....	1 " xvi. 26.
179. 1	Dr. Draper, <i>Conflict Between Religion and Science</i> , p. 47.
181.....	" " 48.
183. 1	Principal Shairp, <i>Culture and Religion</i> , p. 88.
" 2	<i>Conflict between Religion and Science</i> , p. 12ff.
190.....	1 Matthew x. 36.
191.....	1 Genesis i. 28.
".....	2 Matthew xxi. 28.
".....	3 Ecclesiastes, ix. 10.
".....	4 Proverbs vi. 6.
".....	5 Matthew vi. 28.
".....	6 " " 26 (For "Consider," read "Behold").
193. 1	<i>Culture and Religion</i> , p. 168.
205.....	1 Genesis i. 28.
206.....	1 " " ii. 24.
".....	2 " " 16, 17.
".....	3 " " iii. 19.
".....	4 " " ix. 4-6.
".....	5 " " 9.
".....	6 " " 13.
211.....	1 " " xlix. 10.
212.....	1 Acts iii. 22.
".....	2 Isaiah xi. 1.
213.....	1 Matthew xiii. 16, 17.
".....	2 Mark iv. 33.
214.....	1 John xvi. 12.
".....	2 Proverbs xxv. 2.
".....	3 Job xxvi. 9.
215.....	1 Matthew iv. 4.
220.....	1 Second Timothy i. 13.
225.....	1 Mark iv. 26-28.
226.....	1 Romans x. 10.
" 2	<i>Culture and Religion</i> , 115.
" 3	" " 119.
" 4	" " 143.
228.....	1 First Corinthians xii. 6.
229.....	1 Deuteronomy xxxii. 1, 2.
232. 1	<i>Culture and Religion</i> , 6 h.
".....	2 Romans xi. 33-36.
233.....	1 Psalm cxli. 4.
235. 1	Charles Hodge, D. D., <i>Systematic Theology</i> .
".....	2 Psalm xxv. 9.
".....	3 Matthew v. 8.
236.....	1 Psalm cxi. 2.
241.....	1 Matthew xvii. 4.
247.....	1 Isaiah xiv. 32.
251.....	1 Proverbs xviii. 17.
252.....	1 Ephesians iii. 8.
253.....	1 First Corinthians xii. 14.
".....	2 " " 19.
257.....	1 John iv. 21.
258.....	1 Psalm lxxviii. 26, 27.
266.....	1 First Timothy ii. 4.

PAGE.		PAGE.	
267.....	1 Zechariah ix. 10.	305.....	1 Genesis ii. 2-3; Exodus xx. 8. (NOTE.—Only an intelligent being can be inherently and personally—in other words <i>subjectively</i> —holy. A day can no more be <i>holy</i> in this sense, than a house, or a book, or any other purely material thing. God blessed the Sabbath day and sanctified it, not by making any change upon its atmosphere or its sunlight, but by ordaining that <i>man's use of the day</i> should be peculiarly holy.)
268.	1 Samuel T. Spear, D.D., <i>Religion and the State</i> .	309.....	1 Romans vii. 6.
269.	1 <i>The Independent</i> .	310.....	1 Second Corinthians iii. 6.
270.	1 <i>Religion and the State</i> , pp. 51, 53.	313.....	1 Acts vii. 52.
271.	1 Luthardt, <i>Fundamental Truths of Christianity</i> , 169.	".....	2 Isaiah lix. 15.
273.....	1 Second Corinthians vi. 2.	".....	3 Jeremiah xvii. 5.
281.....	1 John xviii. 23.	314.....	1 John xvi. 7.
292.	1 T. Parker, <i>Discourse on Religion</i> , p. 106.	".....	2 Numbers xi. 29.
293.	1 <i>Heroes and Hero-worship</i> , 136.	315.....	1 Acts ii. 17.
294.	1 " " 136.	316.....	1 Revelation xxii. 20, 21.
296.	1 <i>Discourse on Religion</i> , p. 414.		
297.	1 <i>Heroes and Hero-worship</i> , 124.		
298.	1 <i>Heroes and Hero-worship</i> , 125.		
299.....	1 John v. 29.		
".....	2 Second Thessalonians v. 21.		
".....	3 Second Corinthians xiii. 5.		
".....	4 Psalm cxvii. 2.		
302.....	1 First Corinthians iii. 18.		

THE END.

50

Exodus
intelli-
erently
words
lay can
s sense,
or any
thing.
th day
y mak-
atmos-
but by
e of the
y holy.)

iii. 6.

, 21.